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# THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 1953

**HILAIRE BELLOC**

ROBERT SPEAIGHT

**ISLANDS OF EXILE**

VINCENT CRONIN

**THE RIME—AND THE REASON**

J. S. DICKIE

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# HILAIRE BELLOC

By

ROBERT SPEAIGHT

THE DEATH OF HILAIRE BELLOC defies the conventions of obituary. What is the point in speaking of death where so much is alive, or of passing where so much is imperishable? In the active and literary sense Belloc had died more than ten years ago when the triple disaster of the French defeat, his son Peter's death and his own nearly mortal illness stilled his energy for ever. He remained a gentle, patriarchal figure living with the memories of his youth; fixed in the conclusions of a lifetime; enjoying the care of his family and the company of his friends; singing snatches of old songs; forgetful of injury and entrenched in prejudice; always capable of the lightning phrase and the occasional Rabelaisian rhyme; simple in his faith, steadfast in his affections, and calling for wine upon his death-bed. It is thus that I remember him from many conversations over more than a decade, and from two Christmasses spent in his family circle. But what I knew and loved was like the ghost of a great wind that had blown itself out into the calm of a summer evening. Those who had known him longer could still hear the overtones of the tempest. I was among the much larger number who had caught the blast of his creative energy mainly from his books.

It is easy but altogether accurate to say that Belloc's place in English literature will be unique. Men will always argue about his excellence in one or another genre of writing. But when criticism (which often means no more than the whims of contemporary fashion) has been allowed for, it is possible, without any exaggeration of *parti pris*, to ask the following questions. Is there a better biography in the English language than *Marie Antoinette*? Is there a better essay than *Autumn and the Fall of Leaves*; a better pastiche than *Belinda*; a more exact political prophecy than *The Servile State*; a more trenchant polemic than his retort to Wells? If you take the body of his epigrams and his lighter verse, is there anything comparable in the same kind? Is there anything, in the

Parnassian vein, better than the best of his sonnets? Are not *The Path to Rome* and *The Four Men* quite new kinds of books which only Belloc could have written? I do not see how any sensitive reader can escape an affirmative answer to these questions, whether he is sympathetic or hostile to Belloc's opinion and personality. If you are calculating the English achievement in these various expressions of literature, then you are bound to admit him among the masters. He may go violently against your grain; but you cannot deny him entrance.

It has been said that he wrote too much; and he, who set too low a price upon his trade, would perhaps have agreed with you. Among 153 separate publications, not to mention a host of uncollected articles, some are naturally better than others. When Belloc took to dictation, he wrote less well; although his oration to the Saintsbury Club and his Heroic Poem in Praise of Wine, both carefully and deliberately wrought, showed that his powers had not declined. He could always write magnificently when he wanted to; but, except in the matter of his verse, he was careless of his reputation. He did not mix in the literary crowd, and he was indifferent to what they thought of him. He was concentrated as a man, but dissipated as a writer. His books, even at their best—and their best was unsurpassed—were the largesse of his personality; they were not, like the poetry of Yeats or the novels of Hardy or Henry James, its *raison d'être*. To say this is not to disparage the literary *début*; it is only to say that Belloc was a different kind of man.

He was never a great reader, though he had a considerable knowledge of the classics. He admired Homer and Virgil; Catullus and Theocritus; Rabelais, Milton and Molière; the poets of the Pleiade (*Avril* is an excellent introduction to them). He admired the prose of Edmund Gosse and Dean Inge, and the imagination of H. G. Wells. He enjoyed the novels of Trollope. Maurice Baring used to say that any Trollope from the London Library which was not out in his own name was out in Belloc's. But he rarely read the books even of his best friends. Someone was discussing with him the merits of *The Everlasting Man*, and he had to admit that he had never read it. And when he wrote his essay on Gilbert Chesterton's place in contemporary English letters he chose for illustration a collection of ephemeral articles—presumably because he had read nothing else. What he admired

in Chesterton was the man and the mind; he thought the writer, with his incessant paradox, was too anxious to titivate the palates of a middle-class reading public. Belloc, when the matter in hand was unsuitable for rhetoric or satire, was never afraid of being dull. You might dispute his facts, but he knew when not to embroider them.

Although he was prolific, he rarely achieved what writers understand by popularity; that is to say, women did not besiege the libraries for his books. He quite lacked the sophistication which sells, and he regarded the intimate themes of private life as matter for mirth, perhaps, but not for psychological dissection. He could be, when he chose, a grand entertainer, but his purpose generally was to instruct; so that it has become difficult to discuss Belloc at all without discussing his opinions. Now there is something forbidding about a man who is always laying down the law; who is always saying exactly the same things. We may or may not agree with Montaigne that *opinionâtré* is the *signe exprés de bêtise*, but we tend to be bored by it. I will not say that those nearest to Belloc were never bored by his thousandth repetition of a familiar truth—that the English peasant was robbed of his land at the Reformation, that Socialism didn't mean handing over property to the people, but handing it over to the politicians—but they were less exasperated than they might have been because his pursuit of truth was so plainly disinterested. It had no tincture of vanity. This may sound surprising when we remember how prejudiced he could be. But he was a man of strong attachments, and he would no more have deserted an idea than he would have betrayed a friend. He was a man for whom Truth was ever new and ever lovable, and there was in him a strain of chivalry which made him go on praising it to the same tune.

He had a lucid, powerful, and subtle—not too subtle—mind; and he had a boundless appetite for reality. Certain things came home to him with overwhelming force, but he saw them so vividly that their balancing or contrasting opposites were generally excluded from his vision. It would be absurd to suggest that he understood, in any general way, the Church of England, but he did understand one enormously important thing—that the power of Anglican Christianity was literary. "Prevent us, O Lord, in our doings with Thy most gracious favour and favour us with Thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and

ended in Thee . . .”—this had become part of the English religious psychology with which Belloc wrestled to his dying day. Cranmer had possessed the mind of a Cambridge modernist, but his ear was indefectible. English Christianity was bound up with two masterpieces of English prose, and even in Newman's room at Edgbaston, preserved as in his lifetime, it was the Authorised Version which lay thumbed upon his desk. The deep, intimate associations of the Anglican past compose a suasion against which the logic of Catholicism generally breaks its teeth in vain. But Belloc never desisted from the frontal assault. He was more an antique Roman than a Greek, and the tactics of the Trojan horse were not in the curriculum of St. Cyr.

Belloc would have liked to think that his criticism of the modern world was a critique of pure reason; and indeed no man of our time did more to uphold the rights of the intelligence, unbemused by emotion, in its own domain. But in fact his thoughts and preaching were both profoundly conditioned by experience; at their most nakedly geometrical, they were clothed in flesh and blood. His childhood at St. Cloud was passed in the shadow of the great defeat, and against a repetition of that recent shame the Army was the only insurance. When, therefore, the General Staff decided upon the guilt of Dreyfus, the young Belloc felt no temptation to join hands with those who had decided upon his innocence. In this respect, at least, he was perhaps the most illustrious victim of Maurras's *nationalisme intégral*. But the Republic was in his blood; through his own Bonapartist forebears and his study of the Revolution; through his service in the Army that the Revolution had made; through his adherence to the doctrine of democracy, as Rousseau had expounded it in another masterpiece of style. In this allegiance to the Revolution, as the men of '89 had imagined it, he never wavered. You can read his vision in *The Girondin*, and here the vision is defeated; but though defeated, it is not lost. The last time I saw Belloc, I put to him the most torturing of all historical questions—had the Revolution done more good than harm? Undoubtedly, he replied; without it, society would just have withered up. Like his friend, Duff Cooper, I should have answered the other way. But there is no more endearing quality in a man than fidelity to an ancient dream, and it was this virtue, more than anything else, which even through enfeebled age kept Belloc young.



When he came up to Jowett's Balliol, he had one foot in the camp of clerical reaction and the other in the camp of revolutionary progress. He was bored by the Royalists and intolerant of the Faubourg. Like any self-respecting young man, he was contemptuous of respectability and riches. He was by nature sceptical, and though his family were Catholic in the tradition of the *bourgeoisie*, it would seem to have been touch and go on which side he finally stood in the great French quarrel. We do not know very much about the process by which he made up his mind, but it was of the very essence of his Catholicism that it had conquered doubt, although it was strengthened (through his marriage) by a Catholicism which never had any doubts to conquer. The one was wholly French, the other wholly Irish. United, they shook the prosperous and complacent Protestantism of Edwardian England like the wind of Pentecost. The young Belloc had looked behind him into history, and about him into life (his essay, *The Arena*, shows vividly the span of his enquiry), and he decided that the Catholic Church was not of this world. Having made this discovery, he proceeded to communicate it, in a very loud voice, to the educated Englishmen of his time.

They did not thank him for it. His naturally forgiving nature never forgot the rejection by All Souls, and he always attributed this to the militancy of his beliefs. The Common Rooms can accommodate a Don who goes to Mass discreetly and is an influence for good in the College; such exceptions, provided they are rare, can be welcomed as a signal of broad-mindedness. But a man who seriously set about to overthrow Gardiner and Froude and who would have dismissed Acton as a Whig, was perhaps a little sanguine in expecting a Fellowship in History. There are times, even at Oxford, when brilliance is not enough. "The trouble with you, Belloc," remarked F. E. Smith after listening to one of his scintillating speeches in the Union, "is that you will always play the fool." Had the excoriating rhymes about what Belloc, in a fatal phrase during a debate in the House of Commons, was to call "the Anglo-Judaic plutocracy" already begun to circulate? In any case it is instructive to compare the careers of Belloc and Birkenhead—each combative, courageous, and loved to idolatry by his friends. In the one case there was success limited by cynicism, in the other failure lightened by faith. And Belloc's frivolity was immeasurably more serious than



the perorations of those for whom government was a game, and the platitudes of those for whom justice was a joke.

He made his friends among those educated upper classes whom it was his particular pleasure to deride. "The English country house," he said to me once, "was one of the jolliest things in Europe." But the gulf which separated England from the Catholic tradition never ceased to exasperate him. Here, he would say, was the thing which had determined the destiny of Europe; the thing recognized, even when it was hated, by every educated man or woman on the continent; the thing which had to be taken into account in deciding any large issue of politics or morals. And yet it was persistently ignored by the finest intelligences of the country he had made his own. "Their ignorance of the Catholic Church!"—I can still hear the characteristic emphasis with which he bit out these words as I was escorting him to the funeral of Father Vincent McNabb. So long as he had breath in his body he would try to explain to people what it meant to belong to a living, teaching and continuing Church. And he was correspondingly intolerant of what they preferred to call "Christianity"—a vague cloud of inherited sentiments and selected doctrines, interpreted by particular inclinations. What he did not quite understand was the quality of Christian life which could still be lived in communities outside the Church. He would not have denied that this existed, but it was something outside his experience; and just as it was a part of Belloc's fecundity to have experienced a great deal, so it was a corresponding defect in him not to imagine sympathetically or easily the things that were beyond his range. His intelligence, unclouded by emotion though it was, was vital, never academic. No prophet more abundantly lived his preaching.

But his insistent dogmatism still left a false, an unfavourable impression on minds which did not share his certitudes. He never troubled to prepare his listeners for the shock; they were stunned rather than seduced into acquiescence. But when you talked to him in the flesh, you were surprised by his patience and courtesy. He listened well and argued quietly. (I remember, when we were performing *The Four Men* through Sussex, how an actor tried to persuade him of the social benefit of television—he who would not have a telephone in the house!) He was generally fond of his opponents and of the people he was supposed to disapprove of. I never, for example, heard him say a word against the Germans

or the Jews. For years he had a Jewish secretary and I can remember him summing up the Jewish tragedy in a sentence. "Poor darlings, I'm awfully sorry for them, but it's their own silly fault; they ought to have left God alone." Contrarily, he often expressed his impatience with French reactionaries, Irish clericals, and the old English Catholics. There was a certain distinction to be observed between his private preferences and his public attitudes. You felt this when you were privileged to be invited to his house, still lost among the meadows of the Weald. The memento cards in the little chapel upstairs, the faded photographs, a framed sketch that he had done on the path to Rome, the miscellaneous litter of a lifetime—all these proclaimed a public man who had known how to guard, jealously yet never ungenerously, the sanctities of the private life.

It was inevitable that his influence among English Catholics should have been strong, because it is only rarely that genius flourishes in our midst. His convictions and his energy would always have carried him a certain distance, but it was the power of his personality as well as the variety of his gifts which enabled him to impose on so many people a way of thinking and of feeling the Faith. It was his own way, robust and idiosyncratic, high-spirited and tender, and it did not always suit his disciples. Those who were not his disciples reacted against it with irritation and occasionally with anger. His simplifications were often vulnerable. Parliaments could be corrupt, but despotisms were not necessarily better. Aristocracies could be insolent and absurd, but they fostered liberty more than he ever allowed for. In England, at least, the only alternative to the accustomed social relationships has not been the better distribution, but the brutal displacement of property; not the yeoman farmer but the Socialist bureaucrat. The Poles were not invariably angels; the French military mind could occasionally make mistakes; and the English cohesion in disaster was at least a plausible argument for what Belloc would have called the myths of English patriotism. I took a French priest down to see him once, who remarked afterwards "*J'avais l'impression d'un prophète qui se trompe toujours.*" This was not a fair comment, and when I repeated it to Etienne Gilson, Gilson vehemently disagreed. The point about Belloc was that he was so triumphantly right over a few major matters, that he could afford to be wrong over a few minor

ones. His error was to misjudge, very often, the audience he was trying to convince.

But his way of being a Catholic—the humanist way, radical and traditionalist, militant and humble, obedient and free—was still a good way, and it will survive the spurious imitation. There are few men of genius of whom it is natural to say, even after knowing them a little, that they are good men. And it was further true of Belloc that he was sane before he was inspired. There is no necessary connection between sanity and sanctity, and genius is often marked by aberration. It was perhaps a limitation of Belloc's genius that he did not comprehend perversity. And if we are to find his companions in English letters, we must go back to Cobbett and Johnson, and behind them again to Chaucer. Yet because he was sane in a world distraught by lunacy, and happy through much personal misfortune, we should not think of him as a bouncing optimist or an insensitive Stoic. By nature he was inclined to pessimism. He met and lived his sorrows, and the whole of his later life was passed in the company of his beloved dead; of his wife, and the two sons whom the wars had taken from him. In this steadfast reminiscence he was very French, and the last time I saw him, only a few weeks before he died, I had the sensation of speaking to one who already stood himself within the shadow. When we all met, a number of his friends, after the committal of his body to the earth and the commendation of his soul to its Creator, in the house that he had loved so well, the rooms were serene with his presence. The tribute of Chesterton came back; that no man of our time had fought so consistently for the good things.

# ISLANDS OF EXILE

By

VINCENT CRONIN

THE AEOLIAN ISLES, like a flight of fallen thunderclouds, lie some twenty miles north of Milazzo, in size comparable to Capri and Ischia, and perhaps products of the same furious burst of volcanic energy. But they are not a fashionable resort, this group of seven small islands: their crests are not crowned with pleasure domes nor are their sands lined with multi-coloured tents whence sunburned hordes raid the translucent waves. Far from it. *Jejunus* was Cicero's word for them, in his speech against Verres: the quaestor of Sicily was not the man to apply an imprecise adjective, and his epithet remains just today. Yet they are not to be scorned, these impoverished islands, lying like an off-shore wreck, battered by sea and wind: if they provide no appeal to pleasure-seekers, they nonetheless possess a darker, less obvious interest.

The little steamer which plies its course to the archipelago renews a journey Odysseus made, but to the accompaniment of a different siren song, for the radio blares continually from multiple loudspeakers, strident as the April sun. Placards at Milazzo proclaim that the ship leaves every day at eight, and as that hour approached one Easter Sunday morning passengers began to board from the dusty quay, lined with barrels of wine destined for England, the surrounding walls scrawled with political slogans which, so it inconsistently seemed, were proved false by their absurd misspelling.

Once aboard it became apparent that the little steamer made no class distinctions: as in Plato's complete democracy even the animals made their claim to a place on deck. Here, to starboard, was a peasant leading a goat on a piece of string, laughing and talking with his friends above the sound of interpolated music, while in the bows another passenger struggled under the weight of a tunny fish which he evidently intended to sell on the other

side of the strait. Interspersed were men and women carrying their possessions and their food in sacking, sometimes in panniers, never in suit cases. This journey, between Sicily and the small islands, was clearly more of a ferry ride than a voyage.

Not long after the appointed hour the little boat edged away from the jetty, its engines drowned by the broadcast music: it seemed as though the saxophones and trumpets, like the flutes on Cleopatra's barge, played an essential part in our progress. In true Sicilian fashion, most of the passengers were simultaneously proclaiming the reason for their journey and describing the adventures which had befallen them during their stay on the larger island: one had gone to collect an antiquated film which would be shown next evening at Lipari; another had been to Messina to purchase cloth for his shop; a girl of thirteen, carrying a baby, had been visiting her parents, emigrants from the Aeolian group. They were all returning home: it was Easter Sunday morning and the sun shone, a triple occasion for that continual unforced laughter which in those parts is the authentic expression of *joie de vivre*.

If, for the vast majority of passengers, this journey was inseparable from the peasant process of living and making a living, there were on board ship men with other designs, spectators rather than participants. One of these passengers, an Italian from the north whom I had already met in Syracuse—he held an official post as director of antiquities—I now saw standing in the bows of the ship. Recognizing me, he came up and entered into a long and enthusiastic discourse about his work. He was on his way to superintend excavations on the largest island of the group, Lipari, where his latest digging had unearthed pottery dating from the age known as Minoan IA—proof that in the fifteenth century before Christ the islands lay within the orbit of Cretan trade. The news, apparently, was revolutionary, and would involve the reclassification of civilizations. He was planning now to convert the local prison into a museum which, so he imagined, would bring scholars from six continents in pilgrimage to the remote island of Lipari.

Meanwhile the dance music blared and the ship, reaching rougher waters, seemed to adapt its movement to the negro rhythms. While the archaeologist was leaping the centuries of prehistory, my attention was caught again by the young girl,



holding an infant, whom her parents had escorted to the boat. She coughed from time to time in the tired, resigned fashion of the undernourished. Her pretty face was pale and drawn between childhood and maturity. With another girl of her own age she was savouring the fruits of her own, of our own civilization, looking with passionate interest at the pictures in *Domenica del Corriere*. The girl with the infant could not read, so that the other, with appropriate gestures, was obliged to explain the story to her. A vendor approached them: they pooled their lire and bought a packet of caramels to flavour their story. What, I wondered, would the illiterate girl make of the director of antiquities? Would she term him a collector of debris, the litter of dead civilizations, a man to be classed with the road sweepers, one who at night when all activity had ceased, tried to piece the day's events together from the remnants of discarded objects, from confetti in the gutter, from empty bottles? As for the romance of his studies, she would probably miss that: being a peasant of Aeolian stock, she incorporated in her own blood all the different memories and beliefs which he had come to study: she could never place herself outside them, had indeed no need to do so, and she would have failed to understand an attempt to free oneself from time. Besides, life lay too intensely upon her: why desert the caramels and coloured pictures?

Another party, which until now had evidently been watching Milazzo recede from the stern of the boat, came up into the bows. Their build and colouring proved them Germans, even before their voices became audible—husband, wife and schoolboy son. The director of antiquities knew them: we were introduced, but even then they did not relax their faces, as though studiousness must even in the intervals of study be accompanied by high gravity. Their destination, they explained, was Stromboli, the island still in process of creation, to observe the eruptions which take place from the crater at ten-minute intervals. They evinced little interest in the pottery of Lipari: since the father was a geologist, the earth's own prehistory claimed his and his family's exclusive attention. After a few minutes, conversation between the geologist and director of antiquities flagged and finally ceased: the one turned to Baedeker, the other to sherds he carried in his pocket.

Before Milazzo altogether merged with the horizon, Vulcano,

most southerly of the Aeolian Isles, slowly as a surfacing whale rose into view. The main cone is now extinct but a nearby subsidiary crater—a gigantic slag heap which smokes from a thousand pink and yellow holes—is still active: curiously, but with ample justification, the technical term identifies energy with destruction by fire. From the ship goats could be seen searching forlornly for a blade of greenery among the grey ash. A score of huts and a church seemed to comprise the sole habitation, one outpost of the Aeolian diocese which its bishop visits on mule-back and in his own little rowboat, a majestic and dearly loved man. To the north, joined by a spit of sand hidden at high tide, lies Vulcanello, which came into existence in historic times. The diminutive, though justified by the small low-lying shape of the island has an ironic ring, as though one were to say "dear little monster." Pliny describes the great slaughter of fish which attended its birth, for these islands involve death and destruction at every stage of their being. Still further north, separated by a mile-wide strait, rises Lipari, boasting harbour, acropolis and a small town. As the steamer coasted the island, the little white cubic houses, which are also cisterns, showed up against the rugged scenery like blanched bones. The archaeologist pointed out the future museum, while the Germans scanned the volcanic peaks with powerful binoculars and made occasional precise entries in a notebook. The girl continued to turn over the pages of her magazine, but now at the same time she was suckling the infant—it was her own child.

The steamer edged up to the jetty, shyly and slowly as a calf, to be lassoed and lashed down with stout ropes. One by one the passengers disembarked, carrying their artichokes, leading their beasts, to be welcomed with embraces appropriate to a heroic absence of twenty years. The girl with the baby was met by her husband, a short, thick-set man of middle age. He gave her a curt welcome, but on the child he showered affectionate words and kisses. Arab fashion, the girl followed him away, not into the town, but along a dusty road leading up into the hills.

The very feel of the soil beneath the feet, on landing, pointed the contrast to Sicily, rocky and full of grit as opposed to the thick brown soil of Trinacria which produces corn and wine almost spontaneously. Even the sand was grey, a volcanic charred grey, a sinister colour. This first sight of earth which was not



earth at all proved as disconcerting as a failure of first principles. Did this or the green hills of Sicily constitute the world's basic substance? Was matter at heart hostile or friendly? The whole island seemed to be composed of grey grit, having little resemblance to any soil I had ever seen, barbarous as opposed to civilized earth, proving the island's origin from fire and the depths of the sea rather than by disintegration of soft rock: a Plutonic birth as though from hell itself. Though Lipari is the least poor island of the group, trees grow sparsely and along the craggy hills the only cultivated life is an occasional stocky vine, which transmutes the volcanic elements into fiery Malvasia.

The town is in keeping with the soil, at once impoverished and austere. The churches proclaim the fact, presenting in contrast to the magnificent baroque façades of Sicily unadorned stucco fronts, a measure of the island's lack of natural grace. In the main street houses were up for sale and the crumbling condition of the boards suggested a paucity of purchasers. Shop windows displayed shrunken fruit, combs, black ribbon. The cinema turned out to be a converted stables. In addition, something more essential to a Sicilian town than ample produce was missing from Lipari: only after a few moments did I grasp what it was: that undercurrent of laughter which in the Sicilian towns, night and day, is never still. Here people laughed, but only occasionally, as though it depended on an effort of will. The water pumps, even in April, were padlocked, for the rocks retain little of the rainfall; it seeps down to assuage the eternal fires at the hidden base of the island. From the scant numbers in the streets of the town it seemed clear that the islands were suffering from depopulation. The soil must be too thin to support life: the volcanoes which in the region of Etna have proved fertile were here merely destructive. Soon, perhaps, Lipari and the other islands would revert to their original barren condition, devoid of all life, serving perhaps as a resting stage for the more adventurous sea birds.

That afternoon I set off for the highest point of the island. I wished to see whether the extinct volcano called Forgia Vecchia was crowned with a sanctuary, as is so often the case in Sicily. For the first hour of the journey the way was obvious, after which it suddenly dissolved into three indistinct trails. Fortunately a house stood by the fork, its white-washed walls gleaming like sugar icing in the sun. Its apparent owner, an old man, clad

in patchwork rags, was working a recalcitrant garden. As I approached him in order to learn the way, he came to meet me, walking unsteadily not in boots but in pieces of sacking tied round his feet with string. Grey hair and beard framed a gnarled, weather-beaten face, whose eyes were unexpectedly amiable. In reply to my question he pointed out the road I should take, but in a manner which invited rather than dismissed further conversation. Evidently strangers were something of an event, for in a moment his wife came out of the house in some excitement. Having saluted me, she conferred with her husband for a moment and then asked "Would you like to see something rather fine?" I said that that would please me greatly: at which the couple led the way past the door of their single-roomed house—furnished like a setting by Craig with an absolute minimum of properties—to a stone-built shed adjoining. The old man entered and soon returned, rolling a large object similar in colour to an ostrich's egg and about twice the size. He placed it proudly at my feet. "I found it yesterday," he explained. "Up there in the hills. I've found many before, of course, but this is the largest of all. Lift it up." I did so and only then recognized it sufficiently to give it a name: light as papier mâché, its texture both reminiscent and prophetic of schoolboys' inky fingers. "It will fetch a good price down in the village." Then he explained that pumice, no less than lava and obsidian, was the product of volcanoes, and could be found—if one knew where to look—in some of the mountain caves. Eccentric islands, these, composed of grey sand, white pumice and coal-black obsidian, as though the sea had failed again and again, each time in a more absurd fashion, in its attempt to produce true earth, fertile soil suitable for man.

Soon the track came out on to the highest ground; trees altogether gave way, and in the distance I saw the hills covered with white pumice dust, suggestive of an arctic scene until, later, I learned of the appalling conditions in the mines, which the islanders call "l'inferno bianco." Crude rocks of magma littered the summit, but neither here nor on any of the other visible eminences had they been piled to form a sanctuary. From this point the whole archipelago lay visible. A small fishing boat was setting out from the port: that, I supposed, must be the one carrying the Germans on their twelve-hour crossing to Stromboli. This spatial extension of the fleet of monsters recalled to mind

what the archaeologist during our crossing from Milazzo had told me about their history. The Aeolian group had, unbelievably, in the uncertain period of the second millennium, been rich. His proof for this statement lay in the fine pottery which the islanders had been able to import from all over the Mediterranean since the very earliest times. They had given in exchange the only natural treasure they possessed, the volcanic excreta, obsidian, which during the neolithic period had been used all over the known world as a cutting instrument. When with the increasing use of metals obsidian lost its value, the islanders turned another natural gift to advantage—venturing out from their rock-bound coast, they preyed on the shipping lines at a time when piracy was as respectable a trade as cobbling or tunny fishing. With the wealth gained in this fashion the Aeolian lords dedicated trophies at Delphi which vied with those offered by the tyrants of Syracuse and Acragas, most opulent cities of their day. The Pax Romana forced them to a lowlier means of livelihood: their hot springs served to ease the pains of citizens from the capital disordered by riotous living. The Roman domination also provided them with another function which seemed exactly to fulfil their peculiar nature. They were used as a place of exile, just within sight of rich and fertile Sicily, their purpose admirably symbolized in the grey sand and dry grit which takes no account of man except to suggest that he has no right to be there at all. Later, Christianity recognized that this was their proper role, for in the early days of the new religion monasteries were founded here, buildings long since destroyed by fire.

This train of thought was interrupted by the sound of song. Soon, over the rim of the extinct volcano, appeared a group of young people, fifteen or twenty gaily but simply-dressed peasants, singing and dancing, among whom I recognized the girl who had crossed that morning on the steamer. Their dance I supposed must be part of the Easter celebrations, and just as in Sicily I had seen the week preceding Lent celebrated by riotous carnivals, so now, even in this impoverished island, the Easter festival was welcomed with outward as well as inward joy; despite the inappropriate scenery, the choreography was carried over even to this crude stage. When they had completed their improvised dance, one of the men came forward and invited me to join them: they were going to one of their homes for a feast. Descendants of

pirates, the Aeolians have become, after centuries of indigence, hospitable as only the desperately poor can be.

We trooped down from the crest to a small stable-like building. Here on the beaten earth floor stood bed and table, a large chest but no chairs. On the floor sat the girl's companion of that morning, dandling the infant, and around her food had been laid out, of the very simplest, but made regal by the surroundings and the attitude of festivity. The chief attraction was a pastry containing a whole hard-boiled egg, still in its shell, an Easter speciality. Oranges, bread and Malvasia completed the feast. When we had eaten and passed the single cup of wine, attention was centred on the infant. Everyone of the party found a novel way to divert it, with a bangle or a flower, a smile or a movement of the hands. No superlative was deemed too flattering for the child, and the young consumptive mother took stock of them all, applauding the most rapturous. Thus, on a cloud of homage the child glided gradually to sleep in the girl's arms.

Voices were lowered and questions were now put to the stranger in their midst, chiefly about that outer world, beyond the Islands, beyond Milazzo and Rome, which was the goal of their dreams. All these young people hoped to emigrate, since the Aeolian Isles, they claimed, were no place for decent men and women. Their forefathers, it was true, had managed to survive, but what little good had ever been in the gritty earth had now been used up altogether. Besides, the world had grown larger since their day, and if good land was to be had in Australia, why should they remain behind trying to conjure vines out of the unresponsive rock under a continual menace of fire? They had received enthusiastic letters from relations in South America and Australia: if only the process of emigration were not so desperately slow. All such business was controlled from Palermo: was it that the richer, more extensive island took less care than it should of these outlying rocks? The complaint was voiced only to be rejected: they turned about and began to sing once more. They hated these islands, it was true, but only half-heartedly, for this land of sackcloth and ashes constituted, after all, their home, their *patria*.

During Easter week I remained on the Aeolian Islands, scaling the volcanoes and watching the *spada* fishing, which is conducted from small rowing boats with a single mast, where a spotter looks

out for the shadow of the great fish and directs his shipmates until they are close enough to harpoon it through the clear blue water. One night Lipari was lashed by a violent storm, which dashed a fishing boat to pieces and washed up the wreckage next morning on the shore. Then the islands' original name was justified up to the hilt: attacks were launched from all the elements at once: wind and sea were bent on wrecking these preposterous attempts at islands, with their instinct of self-destruction by earthquake and fire.

Finally the day of departure came round. I embarked once more on the little steamer, believing that it would not be difficult to leave. I imagined myself a Roman exile, reprieved by the chance death of a detested Emperor: I would return without reluctance, indeed with a new appreciation for bountiful natural surroundings, to the favoured island of Sicily with its multiple civilizations flourishing still in an eternal present, the pendant of Italy, into which so many of the finer, more brilliant lights have seeped. These sterile rocks held no great art, no picturesque scenery, no galaxy of wild flowers to detain the eye, no bird song to beguile the ear. And yet, once the little steamer put out to sea and the grey islands settled down to become mere buoys, I was conscious of a feeling which no earlier visitor could have experienced, neither the Cretans who first brought pottery to the islands nor the Greeks who first colonized them nor the Roman invalids and exiles, not even the artists and travellers of the last two centuries: a feeling of regret which was less a purely personal and voluntary sentiment than a flash of emotion charged with the *Zeitgeist*, yet nonetheless so intense that had it been possible to alter the ship's course and return again to Lipari, I should have done so on the instant: a regret and sympathy for the man with sacking instead of shoes, hoarding his lump of pumice, for the consumptive girl and her under-nourished infant, for the dancing figures with their dreams of continents on the other side of the globe, a regret which, as the islands steadily diminished in size until they once again merged with the clouds, very nearly amounted to a sense of treason.



# THE RIME—AND THE REASON

By

J. S. DICKIE

*"Yea, marry, now it is somewhat, for now it is rhyme;  
before, it was neither rhyme nor reason."*

ST. THOMAS MORE.

**T**he *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is in some sense an allegory. It is also, of course, poetry. But not pure poetry—like *Kubla Khan*, for example. It is at least possible, in the case of *The Ancient Mariner*, to say what the poem is about. The meaning is detachable; and this without violating the poetry, the magic of the words, or in any way falsifying Coleridge's intention. There is a literal theme, or, if you like, a moral, and this theme is more or less definable.

The theme, I suggest, is the call of conscience. Mr. W. H. Auden has made some mention of *The Ancient Mariner* in his recent book, *The Enchafed Flood*. This book has the intriguing sub-title, *The romantic iconography of the sea*; and Mr. Auden is disposed to find in the poem a purely romantic ship. I am not persuaded that he has taken hold of Coleridge the right way, but there is something new and exciting about every comment he makes on the poem. He quotes at one point the familiar passage about "dread" from Kierkegaard. This connecting up of Coleridge with the Existentialists is in itself an exciting proposition and an important event. I had, it so happened, been reading Heidegger when Mr. Auden's book came my way, and I was overwhelmed to discover the quite remarkable similarity of thought—and even of expression, between Heidegger and Coleridge in the poem. So much so, that I have for the first time been able myself to see *The Ancient Mariner* as a whole and to make sense of it from beginning to end.

I propose, therefore, to put forward the argument, that the ship,

cast upon the waters and left to itself, is a symbol for that special experience which Heidegger calls *resolve*—"the projecting of oneself," as he describes it, "in silence and in readiness for dread, into one's own Being-Guilty."

Coleridge, who had read literally everything, was profoundly influenced by a certain kind of theological literature, of which perhaps the works of Archbishop Leighton are an outstanding example, as is also, though in a different way, *The Imitation of Christ*. Mr. Martin has suggested a possible link-up of *The Rime* with John Newton's *Authentic Narrative*, and in that case *The Imitation* would have been present to Coleridge's mind when he was writing the poem; for it was *The Imitation* which John Newton was reading when the call came to him. Mr. Martin's argument—even if it were entirely convincing—would throw but little light on the interpretation of *The Ancient Mariner*. But the mention of *The Imitation* does afford an important clue. That Coleridge had some such treatise before his mind, is a helpful hypothesis, though not, I think, *The Imitation*. *The Imitation* is the wrong approach for the poem. The climate of thought peculiar to it is seen to perfection in that other ascetical treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Coleridge derived from Kant the doctrine of the Good Will. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is a presentation of the spiritual life from the same familiar premise, a premise, that is to say, familiar already to Coleridge. It is a fair supposition that he had discovered, perhaps out of his study of Leighton, this school of early English spirituality in one of the many works available to him at the time; and though it is unlikely, though not in fact impossible, that he had direct access to *The Cloud* itself, I have considered it permissible to eke out the interpretation of the poem at certain crucial points by a few carefully chosen passages from it.

Whether or no this ship of Coleridge is a properly built "romantic ship," it certainly does not behave in quite the way of other ships. And this in two important respects:

Ships are not ordinarily made to sink into the depths of the sea, as this ship is constructed to do.

The boat came closer to the ship,  
But I nor spake nor stirred;  
The boat came close beneath the ship,  
And straight a sound was heard.



Under the water it rumbled on,  
 Still louder and more dread:  
 It reached the ship, it split the bay;  
 The ship went down like lead.

The Mariner, caught up in "the whirl, where sank the ship," is eventually, by his own unaided efforts, brought back to land.

It is a singular, if not indeed a startling coincidence, that this same word "whirl" (*Wirbel*) is used by Heidegger to describe this same motion, the kind of motion in which the self falling, as it were, from itself to itself, is thrown back into its everydayness.

I take Coleridge to be saying precisely what Heidegger is saying. "The ship" is an episode, a moment of sheer reality, in which the man is face to face with himself, his authentic self, thrown inescapably into "the *that*" of his existence: but none the less, a moment in which he cannot tarry, an experience from which he is thrown back again, just as inescapably, into the ordinary everyday world, albeit, "a sadder and a wiser man."

In the second place, this ship is not at any time going anywhere. There is no projected port, no suggestion that the powers causing it to move take it off its course.

The Wedding-Guest has a project, and is held back from it.

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
 "There was a ship," quoth he.

He "cannot choose but hear"; and what he hears trivializes his world, the world of his former care:

He went like one that hath been stunn'd  
 And is of sense forlorn.

The ship, that is to say, is its own project, in the sense that the man is wholly projected in it.

It is, of course, important to the symbolism that the ship should move, or perchance not move, "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." Nevertheless, this movement has but one significance, namely, the position of the ship with respect to *the Line*. And *the Line* is significant because at *the Line*

The bloody Sun, at noon,  
 Right up above the mast did stand,  
 No bigger than the Moon.

The sun in this position is the scorching light of Truth, and the

ship makes four movements in all in relation to it. The ship is given first making for it with a good wind and fair weather; but when it gets there, a storm-blast "tyrannous and strong" chases it past and on into the icy south. Secondly, it is carried by a fair breeze into the Pacific and up to *the Line* again, where it is suddenly becalmed. Thirdly, it is brought back, south and north, to *the Line* once more by a supernatural agency and to the accompaniment of a wind which roars above but does not touch the ship. At this point

The Sun, right up above the mast,  
 Had fix'd her to the ocean:  
 But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
 With a short uneasy motion—  
 Backwards and forwards half her length  
 With a short uneasy motion.  
 Then like a pawing horse let go,  
 She made a sudden bound.

With this a gentle wind breathes on the mariner, fanning his cheek and leading the ship home.

The total experience is comprised in those four movements. I shall try to say, keeping this pattern in the background, what (in brief outline) I take this experience to be, beginning at the beginning with "the land of ice and fog."

The ice-bound ship symbolizes man in the grip of dread. The horizon of dread is the man himself; and this single proposition requires two separate symbols to express it. The fog is complementary to the ice: the ice closing the man in on himself, the fog extruding from him the world of his care.

The gripping sense of impending dread is symbolized in the tyrannous wind, "he struck with his o'ertaking wings."

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
 As who pursued with yell and blow  
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
 And forward bends his head,  
 The ship drove fast, loud roar'd the blast,  
 And forward aye we fled.

This arresting stanza describes the inescapableness of dread. Mr. Auden, misled (as I think) by Kierkegaard, sees here man "driven on by an irresistible rush of creative powers which he did not expect and which frightens him because he does not know

where they are carrying him except that it is probably into a state of dread. The powers, however, are not necessarily evil. They only, as it turns out, drive him into temptation." I find this, not merely wrong in itself, but wrong as an approach to the experience which follows. It is a mis-rendering of the symbolism. True, the *ship* is driven on irresistibly; but the ship *plus* the wind define a state of the *man* in which he is wholly projected: and that state is dread. The ship has just crossed *the Line*, and the mariner has seen there his moment of essential dread; he is thrown into dread, and his state then, his "dread of dread," as Heidegger calls it, is symbolized as a flight. But this flight does not avail: "he struck with his o'ertaking wings"; that is to say, the dread moment of reckoning is already in advance of his flight, throwing him back into himself in the cold isolation of dread. From dread into dread—there is no escape.

The passage must be understood in relation to the complementary passage at the end of the poem, after the mariner has undergone his bitter *askesis*,

Like one, that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turned round walks on,  
And turns no more his head;  
Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

This "frightful fiend" bears little family resemblance to Mr. Auden's "creative powers." What the mariner dreads is not the anticipation of some naughty temptation; his dread is the grimest of grim realities, the awakening of himself—and *to* himself, of the awful sense of guilt. Hence his cold isolation in the land of ice and fog.

This isolation is nothing to be compared to the utter abandonment the mariner has yet to undergo. Nevertheless, it is in itself a very terrible experience of desolation. He is alone without refuge, alone with himself in dread,

Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.  
The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It crack'd and growl'd and roar'd and howl'd,  
Like noises in a swound.

This strident voice, crying in the wilderness of ice, is conscience. Conscience calls out of dread. It calls, and for the same reason, out of the man, who is for the time being wholly this projection of himself in dread.

I fear thee, ancient mariner!  
 I fear thy skinny hand!  
 And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
 As is the ribb'd sea-sand.  
 I fear thee and thy glittering eye,  
 And thy skinny hand so brown.

Coleridge, in a much quoted letter to Southey, said, "I cannot write without a *body of thought*." The body of thought for *The Ancient Mariner* is to be found in the sombre pages of *Aids to Reflection*. The "dreaded man" in us is there discussed at considerable length and given a proper name. This ancient mariner is there called "the Adam in us." "The same word," he explains, "with its equivalent, the *old man*, is used symbolically and universally by St. Paul." The body of the thought is, that in respect of this Adam, each man is the adequate representative of every other man. In Adam we all fell, and "with no less truth be it said that it is the same Adam that falls in every man."

When, therefore, the mariner in the poem is thrown into the isolation of the land of ice and fog, his dread is dread of himself—as it is dread for himself, in his pitiless predicament. The crack of ice, like the crack of doom, recalls him to the reality of himself, the Adam that he is—and this in an overwhelming awareness of original guilt, putting to silence his self-pity and past evasions.

It is a noticeable fact, surprising to everybody who reads the poem, that no reason is given for the shooting of the Albatross:

With my cross-bow I shot the Albatross.

The record of a fact with no words of explanation. The episode is reminiscent of the biblical narrative of Cain and Abel: "and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

It is reasonable to ask the question, *Why?* Here in the poem the mariner is offered the gift of love. It is love without stint, prepared

to put itself at every possible disadvantage. It is at his beck and call. It eats, so to speak, out of his hand.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.

The mariner kills this Albatross of love. He kills it because its perfect trust in him betrays him to himself. He kills it out of dread.

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?  
By him who died on cross,  
With his cruel bow he laid full low  
The harmless Albatross.  
The spirit who bideth by himself  
In the land of mist and snow  
He loved the bird that loved the man  
Who shot him with his bow."

Let it be that Dorothy Wordsworth, by the very selflessness of her love and tender care for him, betrayed Coleridge to himself, and that he killed the answering love in his heart in very dread of himself—then here in a nutshell is the bleak parable of the dead Albatross. Little wonder that Coleridge, a fugitive from himself to the very end, once he had revised and perfected it, buried this *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* under an immense blanket of forgetfulness, referring to it but once ever again in the course of all his literary work.

Mr. Auden gives two equations in a sort of gender calculus:

Day and the Sun=Consciousness and the Paternal Principle as contrasted with

Night and the Moon=Unconsciousness and the Maternal Principle.

It is possible to psycho-analyse *The Ancient Mariner* in this way. A modern poet may even talk his way from this calculus into poetry. Coleridge himself did not do so. He had something quite else in mind when he made the Sun masculine and the Moon feminine. To say that Coleridge really had Mr. Auden's equations in his mind without being aware of it, is a possible thing to say. It is interesting if it happens to interest you.

The alternative equations are given by Coleridge in *Aids to*

*Reflection.* They work out in relation to the poem in some such way as this:

The "good south wind" in the poem, the wind which brings the ship back to *the Line* again, represents an intention of the will. It is a power for good, a saving grace; and it remains to the mariner even after he has killed the love which offered itself that this grace might be.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
But no sweet bird did follow.

The recriminations of the crew, their justifications and excuses, spring from the other element in man's nature. Coleridge calls this "the inferior nature in Man, the Woman in our Humanity": "the too dear and undivorcable Eve." He explains this feminine principle still further thus:

The same Eve, tempted by the same serpentine and perverted Understanding which, framed originally to be the interpreter of the Reason and the ministering Angel of the Spirit, is henceforth sentenced and bound over to the animal nature, its needs and its cravings.

The "perverted Understanding" is the steersman of the poem; "its needs and its cravings," the crew. The "four times fifty living men" is a symbolic device to represent what in the language of ascetic theology is called *creatures*. "I mean," says the author of *The Cloud*, "not only the creatures themselves, but also all the works and the conditions of the same": in other words, the totality of a man's world, everything he is attached to, his hopes and fears and all his projects—all that matters to him.

The Sun, in this symbolic schema, is "the light of reason in the will itself." The Sun is masculine, the will being, Coleridge says, "*virtus*, the *manhood*." And, as the man Adam "turned his back on the Sun, and dwelt in the Dark and the Shadow," so, in the poem, "the woman in our humanity" is associated symbolically with the Moon. The skeleton-ship is man without the light of reason, the woman in man alone.

And is that Woman all her crew?  
Is that a death? And are there two?  
Is death that woman's mate?  
Her lips were red, her looks were free,



Her locks were yellow as gold:  
 Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
 The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,  
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The prose version of this *dreaded woman* in us, is "the perverted Understanding," described by Coleridge (in *Aids to Reflection*) in these words:

the carnal mind, the sophistic principle, the wily tempter to evil by counterfeit good; the pander and advocate of the passions and appetites; ever in league with, and always first applying to, the *Desire*, as the inferior nature in man, the Woman in our humanity; and through the desire prevailing on the will (the *manhood*, *virtus*) against the command of the Universal Reason, and against the Light of Reason in the Will itself.

The naked hulk alongside came,  
 And the twain were casting dice;  
 'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'   
 Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;  
 At one stride comes the dark;  
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!  
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
 My life-blood seemed to sip!  
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,  
 The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;  
 From the sails the dew did drip—  
 Till clomb above the eastern bar  
 The horned Moon, with one bright star  
 Within the nether tip.

The clue to the symbolism of *the Line*, and to the ordeal there, is not (as I see it) in the Sun, or the star-dogged Moon, but in "one thick black cloud."

The Cloud has two antithetic properties. It obscures the light of the Sun, and it brings the rain. Without the rain,

Water, water, everywhere,  
 Nor any drop to drink.



This drought has a central importance in the poem. It represents a suffering, a desolation of the spirit. Coleridge is thinking, not of the actual pain of the thirst, but of the frustration which thirst occasions, the mortifying dumbness which deprives the mariner of the spoken word and so of all self-justification:

Through utter drought all dumb we stood!  
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
And cried, A sail! A sail!

Comments Coleridge in the marginal gloss (the one lucid sentence in that dreary recital of off-putting irrelevancies): "At a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst."

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was withered at the root;  
We could not speak. . . .

It is here, in this impotence of articulate speech, that the Cloud, has its symbolic importance. "A contemporary critic, whose work Coleridge much admired, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, complained,"—I quote from Mr. Martin—"that *The Ancient Mariner* lacked a moral, to which Coleridge replied that the poem's chief fault was 'the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle, or cause of action.'" With which judgment the average reader will doubtless agree. Perhaps it was that Anna Laetitia Barbauld had failed to connect up the moral with the rest of the poem, in which case her criticism has a good deal to be said for it.

The moral, I take it, is

He prayeth best, who loveth best.

That is to say, the language of prayer is love. Love, not speech.

O happy living things! No tongue  
Their beauty might declare;  
A spring of love gush'd from my heart,  
And I bless'd them unaware;  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
And I bless'd them unaware.  
The selfsame moment I could pray.

Prayer transcends speech,—even poetic speech. Words obscure the moment of prayer, which is love, unprepared, unrehearsed.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,  
 No voice did they impart—  
 No voice; but O, the silence sank  
 Like music on my heart.

Speech belongs, in Coleridge's Kantian vocabulary, to the Understanding; and, as already said, the Understanding is no longer "the ministering Angel of the Spirit." The Understanding is captive to Desire, to the empirical self; and so too the words with which the Understanding utters itself,

But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
 Thy soft response renewing—  
 What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
 What is the Ocean doing?

And the second voice, "soft as honey-dew," replies, that the ocean-blast is guided by the Moon (*i.e.* Desire), but *this* time the ship is set in motion by a power the Understanding can make nothing of.

But why drives on that ship so fast,  
 Without or wave or wind?

And in response to this *Why*-question, the second voice says,

The air is cut away before  
 And closes from behind.

Both Gabriel Marcel and Jean-Paul Sartre have made exactly the same paradoxical response to the same unanswerable question. Marcel calls it an "air-pocket"; Sartre, a vacuum. It is a state of suspension, of indetermination and freedom from all empirical motivation, in which the self lets itself act out of its chosen potentiality of being. The man in this inner action is free: he is choosing himself.

No account can be given of those nihilating moments of freedom,—no reason. As Heidegger puts it, "the *that*" is disclosed, "the *why*" concealed. "Be blind in this time, and shear away covetise of knowing, for it will more let thee than help thee." Under this "thick black cloud," this cloud of unknowing, we live; and the cloud is pierced, when it is pierced at all, not by rational discourse, not by words, but by sharp darts of longing love.

A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 And I bless'd them unaware.

Such a moment is the moment of self-choosing. It is well described by Heidegger as *resolve*; and the moment of *resolve* is well described by Coleridge in the poem:

The Sun, right up above the mast,  
Had fixed her to the ocean;  
But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
With a short uneasy motion—  
Backwards and forwards half her length  
With a short uneasy motion.  
Then like a pawing horse let go,  
She made a sudden bound:  
It flung the blood into my head,  
And I fell down in a swoond.

This "sudden bound" is the dread moment of truth. It is a bound of ready assent,—“a saying Yes,” is Heidegger's way of putting it, “to the inwardness of things.” It is an act which touches man to the quick.

The mariner has had the clear courage to be himself. His fall is the fall of Adam, the flinging of himself, in silence and in readiness for dread, into his own Being-Guilty. “Let that thing do with thee and lead thee whereso it list. Let it be the worker, and you the sufferer; do but look upon it, and let it alone.” This silent, wordless assent “guarantees that most mysterious of all possibilities: the experience of Being. For hard by essential dread, in the terror of the abyss, there dwells awe. Awe clears away and enfolds that region of human being within which man endures, as at home, in the enduring.”

The mariner, to put it another way, has had the clear courage “to hate himself for that thing that he loveth.” The same love, the love he shot with his bow, has pierced for him the cloud of unknowing, and he is at one with himself, as he is with “all things both great and small.”

The woeful agony which wrenched the frame of the mariner in the freeing himself for this atonement, is faithfully recorded by Coleridge in the poem.

The mortification symbolized by the death one by one of the crew, is described thus by the author of *The Cloud*:

“. . . as this cloud of unknowing is above thee, right so put a cloud of forgetting beneath thee, betwixt thee and all the creatures

that ever be made." The pain of forgetting is symbolized in the poem by a curse.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon  
Too quick for groan or sigh,  
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
And cursed me with his eye.

This curse, this pang he cannot forget; and it remains with him, the cause of his suffering, the silent witness to his wrong and short-coming.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor reek did they:  
The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.

Or again, at the very moment of freedom:

All fixed on me their stony eyes,  
That in the Moon did glitter.  
The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never passed away:  
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.

The pang is the self-reproach of the all but converted that he has been unfaithful to his former profession; and for the mariner, in his *conversio ad Deum*, it is an essential suffering, a penance: for his essential wrong-doing is his refusal of himself, his refusal to face up to and be faithful to his real self:

And every soul, it passed me by,  
Like the whizz of my cross-bow.

And so, in the agony of his guilt, he is left silent and alone, "a naked witting and feeling" of his own loathsome being:

Alone, alone, all, all alone  
Alone on a wide, wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.  
The many men, so beautiful!  
And they all dead did lie:  
And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.  
I looked to heaven, I tried to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.  
I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls like pulses beat;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

“All other sorrows be unto this in comparison, but as it were game to earnest.” To him, in this dark night, “a spring of love gushed from my heart,” and the Sun, in the form of lightning, pierces the darkness:

And the rain poured down from one black cloud;  
The Moon was at its edge.  
The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The Moon was at its side:  
Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

But soon the Moon gives way to the full glory of the Sun. Then are the dead bodies resurrected: “they raised their limbs like lifeless tools,” obedient now to the call of love; and inspired with a new spiritual existence, they burst forth in a song of gladness:

Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,  
And from their bodies passed.  
Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
Then darted to the Sun;  
Slowly the sounds came back again,  
Now mixed, now one by one.  
Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
I heard the sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
 And now like a lonely flute;  
 And now it is an angel's song,  
 That makes the heavens be mute.

Nevertheless, it leaves the mariner at the end, not mute, but  
 "with strange power of speech." And this in answer to a question,

'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—  
 What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched  
 With a woful agony,  
 Which forced me to begin my tale;  
 And then it left me free.  
 Since then at an uncertain hour,  
 That agony returns:  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns.  
 I pass like night, from land to land;  
 I have strange power of speech;  
 That moment that his face I see,  
 I know the man that must hear me;  
 To him my tale I teach.

## LORD DAVID CECIL'S CRITICAL PROCEDURE

ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS of contemporary literary criticism is what we may call its salvationist, its revolutionary or reformist concern. Indeed, Mr. Eliot has himself observed that "every serious critic of poetry is a serious moralist as well"; and in much of his own later writing we find him concentrating less upon works of literature in prose and verse considered as formal stylistic phenomena, as verbal constructions or autonomous word-patterns, and more upon their significance as repositories of attitude, thought, and belief. Thus, in the Preface to *After Strange Gods*, we find him readily admitting that the purely literary aspect of letters is only one of its many facets, and that even the attentive literary critic may sometimes be led by outside events to estimate works of literature according to other than literary standards.



But whereas Mr. Eliot is generally careful to distinguish between a non-literary and literary judgment, less perspicacious critics too often confuse them. Against this common evasion of the literary critic's primary function the critical writings of Lord David Cecil sound their own tactful warning; and if we agreed to define the classical approach in the criticism of letters as that attitude of mind which makes its pronouncements and its judgments with regard to the proper limitations of the subject, then Lord David would be seen as a purer and more classical literary critic than Mr. Eliot, the guardian of that altar.

Now, in so far as we can speak of Lord David's critical practice—as urbane, orderly, and intuitive—as proceeding from a common centre, from a concept of literary creativeness, we find the elements of his aesthetic stated in his book, *Hardy the Novelist*.

Every work of literary art [he writes], is the result of a double impulse. In the first place, it is an expression of the artist's personal vision. Wordsworth wants to tell us what he feels when he looks at a daisy. But the writer is also actuated by a more purely creative impulse. He wants to make something in a particular medium, to construct a pleasing object in words, as the sculptor wants to construct a pleasing object in stone. Both these impulses are essential ingredients for the creation of any true work of literature. Without the personal impulse the result is only a raw fragment of autobiography.

Undue stressing, he continues, of either of these factors by the critic produces lop-sided evaluation, and a loss of focus on the work in hand. Chief of the offenders in this field he finds are the "pedantic and psychological" critics.

The first concentrates only on the formal aspect of literature. He theorises on the nature of art in general, lays down laws for tragedy or fiction or style, and then proceeds to judge books by these laws. . . . The pedantic critic is so concerned with the abstract conception of literature that he forgets the facts on which the conception is founded; he forgets the books. . . . The second envisages a book exclusively as the expression of a man; and in consequence judges it by how far he approves or disapproves of his character and opinions.

Between these two extreme interpretations, Lord David attempts a middle course—a passage on the tight-rope of intuition, aided by the balancing-pole of a few simple pre-considerations. "Now it is vital," he asserts, "that the critic should keep the dual character of his subject in mind"—that is, the personal or visionary instinct and the formal or creative impulse. "He must stick valiantly to a central path from which

both these aspects are equally visible. If he does not, he will soon stray off his subject altogether."

To state the matter in positive terms, Lord David feels it the critic's business "to elucidate the nature and quality" of each particular artist's achievement; the first stage in which is to examine the nature of the latter's personal vision, and from this to estimate just how far the vision has received a fitting form. To assess the degree of aesthetic achievement in which a specific work of art results—the degree in which subjective thought and feeling have found their objective incarnation, their translucent chrysalis, so to speak—three characteristics of the artist, Lord David informs us, must first be distinguished: namely, his "creative range," his "angle of vision," and lastly his "convention."

The first of these properties may be defined as that area of experience (naturally including the effects of heredity) upon which memory and inspiration work, and from which the artist creates a secondary world, equipped with planes of thought and feeling parallel and relevant to those which exist in our own "real" world. To attempt to create outside the range of one's own experience or receptivity—one's own mental electric field—is to indulge in non-allergic writing; to establish a kind of prefabricated world whose properties neither reflect nor express the external world of matter or the artist's inner nature; and in his book *Early Victorian Novelists* Lord David censures Dickens and Charlotte Brontë for perpetrating inefficacious spells outside the charmed circle of their own true magic.

The second of these properties, the "angle of vision," is that individual attitude with which the artist regards the world; his philosophical colour-scheme or personal perspective, as we may call it. Now just as his "creative range" provides the data for his work, so his "angle of vision" determines both the arrangement of this data and the significance to be given it.

Finally, there comes the artist's "convention," the acquired or inherited rules of make-belief which both the artist and his public openly or tacitly agree to accept.

All these three elements the critic must examine before he can deliver an answer as to how far the artist has found a form that serves to objectify his vision.

Earlier in this essay I described Lord David's critical practice as orderly, intuitive, and urbane; and the time has arrived to consider more closely the meaning these terms must take on in this context.

First, let us take the term intuition; since it is, I believe, the starting-point and cardinal factor in this writer's critical process. Intuition, then, we here define as the critic's perceptive counterpart to the artist's creative imagination; a kind of critical divining-rod whose infinitely sensitive oscillations approximately serve to measure the presence in a

work of imaginative power. Intuition, it is true, in the field of critical writing is often confused with that kind of subjective adventuring which uses the work of art merely as a point of departure for long lucubrations by the critic upon his own absorbing mind. But even if we next attempt to establish a tentative distinction between intuitive and impressionist criticism—describing the first as an examination of an objective work of art by means of the critic's inner values and the second as an exploration of a subjective state of mind by means of the critic's creative instincts—we shall still discover in actual examples of intuitive critical writing a similar employment and choice of idiom to that which impressionist criticism favours; namely, the presence of imagistic speech and a largely creative use of language.

But against the aberrations to which the latter yields itself (as evident, say, in the work of the American James Huneker, in that of Richard Le Gallienne, and the later writings of Arthur Symons), Lord David is easily withheld by the orderly nature of his mind. In other words, he implements the discoveries of sensibility with method. As we have seen, possession of this last does not in any way imply a tendency to system-building. Instead, it is present to provide the critic with certain *a priori* questions which he must answer when faced with works of art; namely—to recapitulate—what is the artist's "creative range," what is the artist's "angle of vision," and, finally, how far has he succeeded in giving his vision appropriate form? This step-by-step examination of any specific work, together with a graceful pertinacity of purpose (an ability on the writer's part to close with his subject from the very start, and stick to it steadily without loss of perspective), the latter of which expresses itself in easy, accomplished, and urbane speech, devoid of dogma and hard assertion, entitles Lord David to be considered as one of the most classical critics of letters writing in this country today.

But if Lord David reveals himself as a classical critic in his method of working—in the stage-by-stage apprehension of his subject, in the orderly procession of his argument, and in his studious division of labour—his final estimate of a writer's calibre results from application of a romantic concept. Thus it comes about that he affirms, in his Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, that "Poetry should be a spontaneous expression of the spirit; the poet lets his personality burst forth without concealment." This, however, should not be understood as implying that he who confesses is a poet; for although all poetry partakes of confession, all confession—in its turn—need not be poetry. In other words, a poetic confession is not to be considered as poetry on account of the confessional element within it, but rather on account of some other element. This latter we may term the creative, in order to distinguish it from the purely recitative nature of

confession. The poet is, vocationally, first a maker, and only secondly a confessor.

If at this point the reader objects that I am interpreting Lord David's text in a false high-handed fashion, and that in stating it right for the poet to let "his personality burst forth without concealment," he was unequivocally giving his support to a self-expressionist concept of art—an art of emotional self-indulgence—I can only refer him to Lord David's *Early Victorian Novelists*, in which he maintains that the artist's "distinguishing essential qualification . . . is what for want of a better term is called 'creative imagination'; the power, that is, which generates that union of artist and material in which alone the child of artistic life is born." Lord David's cardinal principle of judgment results, then, from an attitude of temperate romanticism; a romanticism, we can say, of imagination not of confession.

Holding these views, he therefore opines that an artist's greatness or calibre depends upon the degree in which he possesses "creative imagination"—that power which patents and personalizes the world of fiction which he creates; that power which unifies the work, not by deftness of construction, but by imposing an atmosphere which is constant, individual, and unique. On the other hand, Lord David recognizes that the great or powerful artist by no means needs be a perfect artist. Greatness, he ventures, pertains to vision: perfection to craftsmanship or construction. As examples of this antithesis, he instances Dickens as the greater writer, but Trollope as the purer and finer of the two; whilst in the work of Jane Austen he finds the English novel in its perfect form.

Such, then, are Lord David's guiding principles, the instruments of his critical craft—precision-tools, we may indeed term them—whose employment in his hands is as skilled and delicate as is their own devising.

DEREK STANFORD

## THE BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATIONS

IN 1896, HENRI BECQUEREL discovered that uranium minerals could fog a photographic plate placed in contact with them even in complete darkness. This showed that some radiation was emitted from the mineral which affected the photographic plate in the same way as light. This simple discovery led to the isolation of radium and to numerous investigations of radioactivity and the structure of the atom

which have culminated in the many applications with which we are so familiar today. Becquerel was accustomed to keep his strong source of radium in his pocket. One day he noticed that the area of his skin nearest to the source was slightly reddened. This is one of the first recorded instances of the biological effects of atomic radiations.

The discovery of X-rays by Röntgen resulted in an increasing number of people being exposed to atomic radiations, as the X-rays were soon extensively used for medical diagnosis. The early workers liked to demonstrate to their friends how the X-rays could penetrate the tissues of their hands, making visible a silhouette of their bones. Most of the early X-ray generators were inadequately shielded and those who used them were ignorant of their danger. As a result, several investigators developed cancer and died prematurely.

During the First World War, the numbers on the dials of some instruments were painted with a radioactive compound, so that they could be read in the dark. The workers who painted the numbers used to lick their brushes and so swallowed a small amount of radium. A few years later, many of them developed cancer of the bone.

Those who work in uranium mines breathe in a certain amount of radioactive dust as well as radon, a radioactive gas emitted by radium. As a result, the miners at Joachimsthal (Czechoslovakia), for example, had a death rate from cancer that was over thirty times that of the rest of the population.

Such tragedies as these led to an increased realization of the dangers of atomic radiations. Stringent safety precautions are now taken in all industries using radioactive compounds, with the result that mishaps are reduced to a minimum. It was the destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, however, which first drew widespread public attention to the importance of the effects of atomic radiations on the human body. Now, with the increasing use of radioactive substances in industry and the prospect of vast plants for the generation of nuclear energy, this subject is of vital interest for us all. Some effects of these radiations on animals and plants are similar to their effect on man. Indeed, much of our knowledge has been obtained by experiments on them which clearly could not have been made on human subjects.

#### THE MECHANISM OF THE ACTION OF ATOMIC RADIATIONS ON LIVING ORGANISMS

The body of man is composed of a large number of complex chemical substances. These are grouped together in fundamental units called cells. These cells are built up into tissues and the tissues into the various systems, respiratory, circulatory and so on, which comprise



the body. When a beam of atomic radiation passes through the body, many of these complex chemical molecules, which often contain thousands of atoms, are ionized or broken up. The groups of atoms which are the fragments of the original molecules are often highly reactive and combine with other molecules, causing further destruction. If a large number of the molecules constituting a cell are broken up in this way the cell will die or behave abnormally. No pain is felt when atomic radiations pass through the body. There is consequently no reflex action or conscious avoidance of further harm, such as that which occurs when we are burnt. It is possible to receive a lethal dose of radiation and be quite unaware of it for several hours.

The effect of such irradiation on the body as a whole depends on a number of factors. If the intensity of the rays is low, no ill-effects are observed, for the body can replace the few cells that are killed before their loss is felt. Indeed, we are all continually bombarded by the cosmic radiation from outer space with no noticeable consequences.

A small exposure to atomic radiation will not give rise to any immediate ill-effects, but if continued over a period of years it will result in lowered vitality and perhaps even to cancer of the part of the body exposed to the radiations. A larger exposure causes radiation sickness, which will be discussed in more detail when we consider the biological effects of atomic bombs. A dose of radiation which, if received in a short time, would lead to serious illness, may be harmless if received gradually over a period of years. This is due to the great recuperative powers of the body, which can replace the cells destroyed.

There are many different kinds of atomic radiations. The alpha particles are doubly charged helium nuclei which ionize very heavily, causing great damage. They have a short range and are soon stopped by the skin and so cannot penetrate into the interior of the body. But if a substance emitting alpha-particles is absorbed by the body it can cause serious illness. This is what happened to the workers in the instrument factory who licked their brushes. The beta-particles, which are fast electrons, ionize quite lightly, but can penetrate several inches into the body. X-rays or gamma-rays are of the same nature as light rays, but are of much shorter wavelength and higher energy. These, being uncharged, cannot ionize directly, but they eject electrons from any atoms they hit. These electrons can destroy the living cells through which they pass.

A type of radiation unknown to classical radioactivity is the neutron, an uncharged particle emitted in enormous numbers from atomic explosions. These, being uncharged, have no direct effect on tissue. But they can collide with atoms in the body, giving them much of their energy. These secondary particles are charged and they destroy



many of the cells in their path. Neutrons, X-rays and gamma rays are very penetrating and can go right through the body with little diminution of intensity.

Cells that are reproducing themselves by division are much more sensitive to atomic radiations than those in the normal state. A consequence of this is that children, especially those unborn, are much more vulnerable than adults. Some parts of the body are much more sensitive than others. A dose large enough to kill if received by the whole body will only produce a little redness if concentrated on the arm.

#### THE EFFECTS OF RADIATION FROM THE ATOMIC BOMB

When an atomic bomb explodes, a temperature of some millions of degrees is produced in a small volume. This initiates a powerful shock wave, similar to the blast of an ordinary bomb but much more intense, which destroys or damages any buildings in its path. At the same time, an intense burst of gamma rays is emitted which causes severe burns on anyone exposed to them. Neutrons accompany the gamma rays and together they destroy living tissue as described above. Radioactive fission products are produced in large quantities by the explosion. These are spread over a wide area and constitute an additional hazard.

The injuries to personnel resulting from such an explosion are due to blast, burns and atomic radiation. Many people near the centre of the explosion who are killed by blast also receive a lethal dose of neutrons or gamma rays. It is therefore difficult to estimate the number of people killed by each of the various effects of the explosion. A number of people who survived the immediate effects of the Japanese explosions died later from radiation sickness. These are believed to constitute from five to fifteen per cent of the fatal casualties. Atomic radiation does not cause most of the casualties from an atomic bomb. Nevertheless, it has received greater publicity than the more usual types of destruction on account of its novel features.

Those who have received a lethal dose of atomic radiation experience nausea and vomiting in the first few hours. The next few days constitute a deceptive period in which no definite symptoms develop. But many cells in the body have been killed. The damage to those tissues in the bone marrow which produce white blood corpuscles is especially serious. As a result of this damage, no more white corpuscles are produced. Since the function of these corpuscles is to fight bacteria, an increased susceptibility to infection ensues. Small wounds do not heal, and haemorrhages become frequent. Towards the end of the first week, diarrhoea and vomiting take place, together with inflammation of the mouth and throat. In the second week, this is followed by fever,

rapid emaciation and death. In cases of less severe exposure, the illness may take three or four weeks to run its course. On the other hand, a much larger exposure leads to death in a still shorter time. People who receive a moderate dose of radiation may experience no definite symptoms for two or three weeks. Then they begin to lose their hair and feel unwell. Later on a sore throat and diarrhoea develop and the patient becomes pale and emaciated. During this time, however, the body has been rebuilding the tissues that produce the white blood corpuscles. Soon they are being produced in increasing numbers. If the patient was in good health at the time of the exposure, the symptoms will gradually disappear and final recovery will be complete. The treatment adopted in cases of radiation sickness is complete rest, with blood transfusions to combat anaemia. Penicillin is also used to reduce the risk of secondary infection. Those who recover from radiation sickness seem to be more prone than the average person to cancer and to cataracts of the eye.

#### THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

There are some circumstances in which the destructive action of atomic radiation on living tissue can be used for a beneficial purpose. In cancer, groups of cells in the body start multiplying with abnormal frequency, producing a tumour. If atomic radiations are made to pass through such a tumour, many of the abnormal cells will be killed and the growth will stop. Many cancerous tumours have been successfully treated in this way. The probability of success is much greater if the tumour is treated in the initial stages of development.

In the early days of radioactivity, radium, which is only available in very small quantities, was the only known source of atomic radiations sufficiently intense for medical use. The recent discoveries in nuclear physics have made possible the production of a wide range of artificial radioactive substances. These will enable many more cases of cancer to be treated than was possible in the past.

This treatment can be easily applied if the tumour is on the surface of the body. It is much more difficult when an internal organ is attacked. In recent years, however, powerful machines have been developed which can produce intense beams of atomic radiations capable of passing right through the body. When these are used, great care has to be taken to ensure that the healthy cells surrounding the tumour do not receive a harmful dose of radiation. This is not easy in the case of internal tumours. The usual method adopted in such cases is to send several beams through the tumour from different directions. The tumour then receives a much higher dose of radiation than the surrounding tissue.

Another method of treatment is based on the way in which the body concentrates various chemicals in the parts of the body which need them. Thus a large proportion of the iodine in our food is sent to the thyroid gland in the neck, where it is used to build up thyroxin. Sometimes this gland is attacked by cancer. The patient is then fed with radioactive iodine, which is concentrated by the body in the gland. The tumour is consequently irradiated from the inside, which is much more efficient than the older method of outside irradiation. The radioactivity of the iodine dies down in a few days and so constitutes no permanent danger. This method of treatment could not be used if this were not so. The activity of radium, for example, dies down extremely slowly, and is a source of great danger if absorbed by the body, as we saw in the case of the users of radioactive paint. It should be added that only certain types of cancer of the thyroid gland can be treated by this method. It is not known why some cells suddenly start multiplying to produce a tumour. It is indeed a curious paradox that the same radiations which stimulate its growth can subsequently be used to destroy it.

The way in which the body concentrates some chemicals in certain parts of itself can also be used to locate tumours. It is known, for example, that phosphorus is concentrated in brain tumours. If the presence of such a tumour is suspected, radioactive phosphorus is given to the patient. A sensitive detector of atomic radiations is then moved over the scalp and, if a tumour is present, it will react when it is over the tumour. Should a surgeon decide to remove the tumour, he then knows where it is situated.

Radioactive substances are being increasingly used in diagnosis and to study the metabolism of the body, as well as to treat cancer. This branch of medicine is still in its infancy. Much careful research remains to be done, but the results obtained so far hold great promise for the future. It would, however, be wrong to exaggerate the power of the new methods for there are many difficulties connected with their successful application.

#### THE GENETIC EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATIONS

The cells of the body each contain a number of thread-like structures called chromosomes. Each chromosome contains along its length a number of genes, like beads on a string. It is the chemical structure of the genes which determines the physical characteristics we inherit from our parents. If atomic radiations pass through the cells, their structure is altered. Chemical changes, or mutations, take place in the genes, and sometimes the chromosomes are broken. When this happens to a reproductive cell it often causes sterility or abnormal offspring. If a

mutation is not lethal it will be reproduced and passed on from generation to generation.

Mutations also occur spontaneously. According to the genetical theory of evolution, the gradual improvement of a species is due to the selection of favourable mutations and the elimination of unfavourable ones. Mutations are nearly all disadvantageous, since they occur at random relative to the needs of the organism in its particular environment. However, if the environment of a species changes, a mutation that was previously unfavourable may become favourable, and selection will cause its frequency in the species to increase. In this way a species can adapt itself to a changing environment. Most of the mutations caused by atomic radiations are recessive. This means that the characteristic corresponding to the particular gene only appears if both parents have that particular mutation. As a result, the effect of a mutation may not appear for a large number of generations.

The genetic effects of atomic radiation are therefore probably all disadvantageous. They cause an increase in the frequency of miscarriages, still births and hereditary diseases. There is not even the gradual long-term improvement of the species as a consolation, for selection cannot operate so efficiently on a population which, quite rightly in this case, preserves those individuals that are less fitted for survival than their fellows. These genetic effects are easily forgotten, for many of them will not appear until long after we have gone from this earth. Yet they are a most important responsibility, for we are but the trustees of our genetic constitution which will determine the physical characteristics of our descendants and which, once damaged, can never be repaired.

#### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

In all the industrial and research establishments where sources of atomic radiations are used stringent safety precautions are enforced to make sure that no person receives a harmful dose of radiation. The areas where a high density of radiation is present are shielded with lead or some absorber, and often detectors which ring an alarm when the radiation intensity rises above a certain level are placed at strategic points.

Special care is taken in laboratories where radioactive substances are handled in considerable quantities. People who work in them change into protective clothing before entering. At the end of the day they are examined to see if they have become contaminated. Chemical operations are performed by remote control, often with a lead screen shielding the operator. Fast pumps change the air in these laboratories

frequently so that radioactive dust does not accumulate. Chemical residues are stored in underground tanks until their radioactivity has died down to a safe value before they are released into the drainage system. Glassware is used only once. After use, it is broken and stored where it can do no damage. Each worker wears a small piece of photographic film which is sensitive to atomic radiations. These are developed periodically and if one shows that a particular person has received more than the tolerance dose, he is given appropriate medical treatment. As a result of these precautions, the number of accidents in atomic energy installations has been remarkably low, in spite of the enormous number of people employed in them. X-rays are now extensively used in industrial radiography, X-ray diffraction analysis and diagnostic radiology with no ill effects. The few accidents that have occurred were due to the neglect of the safety precautions.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The effects of atomic radiations on the human body are almost all destructive. Yet we are on the threshold of an era in which atomic energy will be increasingly used both in research and in industry. Many people will risk exposure to the harmful radiations. It is the responsibility of all those in charge of establishments using radioactive substances to see that their employees have every protection. This will cost money and effort, but it must not be neglected.

On the other hand, there is no justification for undue alarm. Provided safety precautions are established and rigorously followed, working on atomic energy need be no more dangerous than in any other industry. The chief danger is that workers will become lax because atomic radiations are unseen and cause no immediate pain. But they are none the less real.

The benefits to humanity from the widespread application of atomic energy will far outweigh the extra trouble of following simple precautions. Atomic power plants will make us less dependent on dwindling coal supplies. Industrial processes will be helped in many ways by the unique properties of radioactive substances. The increasing availability of sources of atomic radiation will save many from an early death from cancer. Medical research will make great progress as a result of the tools provided by atomic physics.

Scientists have put a force of immense potentialities into the hands of man. It is the duty of us all to see that it is used for his benefit and not for his destruction.

P. E. HODGSON



## REVIEWS

### ST. BERNARD'S LETTERS

*The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, newly translated by Bruno Scott James (Burns and Oates 42s).

THIS IS AN ACHIEVEMENT by which translator and publisher have placed students of medieval history or Christian sanctity in their debt. Fr. Scott James has given us a translation admirable alike for accuracy and good English, and, where necessary, has prefaced letters with explanations making clear the circumstances under which a letter or group of letters was written. As he proves by quoting the original of many obscure passages, Dr. Eales's translation of the letters was insufficiently accurate. Fr. James's will surely be definitive. And some letters are included which have been discovered in recent times and never before translated, some not even published. Among these is a letter to the English people urging them to join the Crusade.

Having paid this well-deserved tribute to his work, may we be permitted to regret the slip of using "transpire" in the sense of take place, happen.

The correspondence of the most outstanding European figure of the first half of the twelfth century is an historical source-book of the first importance. The domination of religious life by the new and rapidly expanding Cistercian monasticism, the close interweaving of Church and State with inevitable encroachments by the secular ruler into the ecclesiastical domain, the Papacy disputed between Innocent II and Anacletus (Pier Leone)—though neither election would be valid by modern standards, the Church, largely under St. Bernard's influence, decided for the former—the long disputed election to the See of York, many other disputed elections to bishoprics, the heresies, certainly not intentional, of the ill-starred Abelard, frequent defections from monastic stability by monks or Abbots, aggravated now by the attraction exercised by the Cistercian reform upon members of the older Orders—such are the themes with which these letters are concerned.

Obviously the letters reveal their writer's character, in particular a humility in constant tension with the conscious vocation of a spiritual and ecclesiastical leader, a charity which must contend with a temper naturally prone to aversions as strong as affections. And from time to time illuminations flash out from the depths of the saint's prayer. But we must not expect from the letters what their writer had no thought of giving us. St. Bernard does not seek to reveal his inner life, does not indulge in psychological subtleties, does not concern himself with the



colourful surroundings or illustrative details of life. He writes in a traditional and largely conventional style, and stuffs his letters with Biblical quotations or allusions, many of them repeated constantly, even clichés. The reader becomes a little weary of Phinees's zeal against the ungodly, of the serpent's head joined to its tail, scale joined to scale, of the bread brought out to the famished fugitive, the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, or the text, "He who does not join with Me scatters." Moreover, from charity or convention, misdeeds denounced in scathing invective are seldom specified. The reader does not know, though presumably St. Bernard's correspondent did, what is the definite charge against the sinner. And often it is impossible for historical research to supply the information. But nothing surely is duller than abstract denunciation or praise.

Drawn reluctantly into the labyrinth of ecclesiastical politics, the saint once or twice seems to have been too diplomatic. He promises Abbot Arnold that, if he may meet him, he will do his best to obtain authorization for his attempted flight from his monastery to the Holy Land, but implores the Pope on no account to give it. And at least he does not censure advice given to Count Theobald to pledge himself under duress to get an episcopal interdict lifted, because he knows that the Pope will reimpose it.

Incapable of understanding or sympathy for Abelard's mentality, he places the most unfavourable construction on what he writes. It is consoling to know that Peter the Venerable was able to reconcile the two at the end.

But one man in particular was the target of the saint's most unrestrained vituperation. He is "rotten from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head," "a vile and infamous person," "this unrighteous man," "that man of perdition," "that poisonous tree." "The papal legate has heard such things of this man that his nostrils would not be able to endure the stench"; "Religious men cannot bring themselves to receive with a sound conscience the sacraments from this man's leprous hands." Let a saint write of a saint, St. Thomas is said, though untruly, to have commented, when he heard that St. Bonaventure was writing the official life of St. Francis. Here, in fact, a saint is writing of a saint, St. Bernard of St. William of York. It must, however, be said that when these letters were written William had by no means attained his later holiness, his election had been secured by royal pressure, and his supporters at any rate were guilty of serious crime.

Far above the inevitable dust of disputes is such a letter as the magnificent exposition of the law of charity addressed to Prior Guigo of the Grande Chartreuse, the letter to Cardinal Peter on "understanding and love, knowledge of and delight in the truth," the soul's "two arms" with which "the length and breadth, the height and

depth, eternity, love, power and wisdom are embraced." Or the saint's affectionate pleas, both unavailing, to Thomas, Provost of Beverley, to be true to a Cistercian vocation, to his nephew Robert to return to it. And particularly attractive in a man of so imperious a nature is the confession that in a moment of anger he had harshly, indeed unlawfully, expelled a monk from Clairvaux. Bernard's holiness was not made of the plaster of a repository image, but of flesh and blood, often recalcitrant. And so we see it in these letters.

The famous letter to the Canons of Lyons against the feast they had introduced of Our Lady's Conception proves that on the one hand St. Bernard did not understand her conception as the Church does when declaring it immaculate, but as her active conception by her parents, not the infusion of her soul. On the other hand, he does in fact deny the doctrine even as correctly understood. For he asserts that she was sanctified in the womb like the Baptist, though unlike him so completely as to be henceforth sinless. Incidentally he says that a feast in honour of her parents would be obviously absurd!

It is evident from the tenor of these letters that with his contemporaries St. Bernard regarded the religious state, particularly in its Cistercian rigour, as above all a comparative security against damnation, a view hardly encouraging for the vast majority of Catholics whose vocation is to life in the world. A letter to the Abbot of Anchin contains a beautiful passage on our communion with departed friends.

The extent to which the social order conditions the expression even of holiness is strikingly revealed by an *obiter dictum*. "God is not at all a respecter of persons and yet, I don't know why, virtue is far more pleasing in the nobility."

The translator explains the affectionate language of St. Bernard's two letters to Countess Ermengarde, a widow who had become a nun by "the taste and customs of the times." But, in fact, he does not write in terms so affectionate to any other woman, hardly indeed to any fellow monk. It seems clear that he had found in her—be it remembered an elderly woman, at any rate in twelfth-century eyes—the sympathy and understanding, perhaps in days of weariness and discouragement, which a woman can give a man, so that there was a strong bond of spiritual affinity between them. The lives of the saints prove that there can be and is a bond between the sexes of another and higher order than biological sex.

On page 104, line 14, is not the "Not" before "sing" a mistake? And on page 43, line 30, should not "do" be "doest" or "dost"? "Who," on page 2, line 1, must be a misprint for "whom."

E. I. WATKIN

## AN ANGLICAN STATESMAN

Salisbury 1830-1903: *Portrait of a Statesman*, by A. L. Kennedy (John Murray 25s).

*British Prime Ministers*, Introduced by Duff Cooper (Wingate 15s).

THOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN PRIME MINISTERS of Great Britain for a longer period than there have been Presidents of the United States, yet the former office enjoyed no legal recognition until the present century had begun. It was only on the retirement of the Unionist Administration in 1905 that the post which had enjoyed a *de facto* existence for so long acquired a *de jure* one, a salary of £5,000 a year and precedence immediately after the Archbishop of York being assigned to it. English history from William the Conqueror to George I is the story of England's kings and queens. Thenceforward it tends to become the story of her Prime Ministers. *British Prime Ministers* is a symposium which appeared originally in *History Today*. It is far from complete. Even if we exclude the two living men who have held the office of chief adviser to the Crown, five other Prime Ministers of the present century are missing from it.

All who have assumed office since 1900, both those included in the symposium and those left out of it, have been members of the House of Commons, a state of affairs in marked contrast to that prevailing in the two previous centuries when the head of the ministry was so often a peer. Britain has still an unwritten constitution and so the question may be asked whether the force of precedent is now such that the Prime Minister must be a member of the Lower House. On the resignation of Mr. Bonar Law in 1923 Lord Curzon, in other respects the most obvious candidate for the premiership, was passed over in favour of Mr. Baldwin on the ground that he was not a member of the House of Commons, it being felt that the Labour Opposition would not tolerate a Prime Minister who was not. This might seem to have finally settled the matter; but it apparently did not, for Sir Duff Cooper (under which name Lord Norwich is still best known) tells us that when the reconstruction of the ministry was under consideration in the spring of 1940 the idea was seriously entertained that Lord Halifax should become the head of it, his membership of the Upper House not being considered an insuperable obstacle. Yet speculation on such a contingency as that of another peer Prime Minister is now complicated by the fact that the future of the Upper House of the Legislature is itself in the melting-pot. But whatever the future the third Marquess of Salisbury, to whose career the longer of these two books is dedicated, will remain the last Prime Minister to have held the office while occupying a seat in the old House of Lords.

A detailed biography of this statesman by his daughter exists but is unfinished, and this is Mr. Kennedy's reason for a complete though shorter one whose appearance coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of Lord Salisbury's death. Was he one of England's greater Prime Ministers? Perhaps we should not attempt to answer this question in a single word. For in judging of statesmen our sympathy with their policy or our lack of it must influence our verdict. One thing is certain. No other Prime Minister before or since is so clearly identified with the zenith of Britain's power as was he. At his birth she had already taken rank as first among the nations of the earth. At his death seventy years later she retained that position. Salisbury was Prime Minister when both the Jubilees of Queen Victoria were celebrated, and this epoch may be reckoned as the high-water mark of Britain's power. He thought too much of that power in terms of "prestige." He does not seem to have grasped the difference between the degree of territorial expansion which his country could in favourable circumstances achieve and that which she could reasonably expect to maintain for an indefinite period. Salisbury did not understand the Irish Question. On that of Turkey he wobbled. In his wiser moments he saw that Gladstone was right and that Turkish rule over the Christian population of the Balkan Peninsula should be brought to an end, yet weakness betrayed him into pursuing an opposite policy. Even in his own lifetime the attempt to create for Turkey a military frontier in the Balkan mountains, for which Britain was ready to go to war with Russia in 1878, had had to be abandoned. Twelve years after Salisbury's death Britain concluded a secret agreement with Tsarist Russia promising even Constantinople to her.

Yet Lord Salisbury had great ideas. He saw in the "Concert of Europe" a stepping-stone to a European federation, and his judgment at times revealed a prophetic shrewdness. He distrusted Socialism and viewed with suspicion measures which he feared would lead parents to throw responsibility for their children on to the State. The larger problems of social reform did not interest him. Like Gladstone, Salisbury was an earnest Christian. He did not perhaps accept the full Tractarian position, but was rather an old-fashioned pre-tractarian High Churchman. He could not understand how a man could change his religious denomination after he had passed the age of forty. Yet despite his high moral principles he on occasion told lies in Parliament, a thing which Sir Edward Grey would never do. Salisbury remained in office when his declining powers should have counselled its relinquishment, and in the uneven struggle between the British Empire and the Boer Republics, with which his political career closed, he appears as a pathetic figure.

HUMPHREY J. T. JOHNSON

## ROME AND OTHER IMPRESSIONS

*Rome and a Villa*, by Eleanor Clark (Michael Joseph 21s).

WE LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS BOOK because we read it had a chapter about fountains, and, since childhood, we have been devoted to the Roman ones. But the volume is very baffling. Thus several pages recount the tragic history of a Sicilian bandit, killed when he was twenty-eight, in 1950. This section could be lifted out of this book without harm, especially as Miss Clark gives so much space to imagining the progressive corruption of his mind. Another section that could be made a separate brochure deals with a Roman poet, Belli (1791-1863), author of over 2,000 sonnets in popular Roman speech which usually, therefore, need translations, though we cannot feel that Miss Clark's are always happy. "Che bella matinata! Proprio te dice: cammina-cammina," loses all its savour in: "What a beautiful morning! It really tells you to be on the move." There is plenty of colloquialism in Belli, plenty of slang and indeed extreme vulgarity. But slang is not called for here; and, above, "te senti arifiatata" is merely banal when rendered: "you begin to breathe again." Apparently this poet aimed at expressing the essence of Rome by way of coarseness, violent exaggeration, caricature and even obscenity and blasphemy. His picture of Rome is no more complete than Hogarth's of London or Joyce's of Dublin: the irony is that Belli was himself perfectly bourgeois, and his statue in Trastevere is top-hatted and frock-coated. True, his sonnets were not published till well after his death: apart from these, he seems to have written only "some mediocre verse in literary Italian" and he is now generally disregarded. This chapter will not add to his admirers.

Hadrian's villa near Tivoli certainly deserves close study, but also a map if we are even to begin to visualize the ground-plan upon which Miss Clark erects *her* villa. For while her erudition is incontestable, her imagination is exuberant and quite uncontrolled; and her use of adjectives strained and even unintelligible—how does one think of a "time" as "a tremendous mauve convulsion"? Moreover, the detailed description of the villa, fanciful enough already, is accompanied by that of the moods, emotions and complexes of poor Hadrian, to say nothing of Antinous, till the very ruins seem endowed with a psychology and indeed a sexuality exhaled by that of the emperor and his favourite, at least as Miss Clark imagines them.

The book, however, does begin about Rome, and Miss Clark is perfectly right in feeling that Rome, to a visitor, must at first seem like a mere jumble, so many Romes have been piled one on the top of the other and project through one another. But we think she is mistaken when trying (as the jacket says) to make us "aware of all the Romes at



once," especially as she never lets us off any of her own excitable comments and impressions, which are seldom anything like our own. After a chapter called "The Campidoglio," which does in fact deal here and there with the Capitol, she has her chapter about fountains (and much more): the Acqua Paola gives her the chance of saying—the book is very anti-clerical—that "The priests and monks and nuns are shocking: what is this vast population feeding at the expense of the other? . . . It is only in the faces of the nuns that you see sometimes signs of great suffering." But her anti-clericalism is presumably the American type, which just does not understand, not the Latin type, which hates, and it need not worry us. What does worry us is her failure to appreciate the fountains as such: she concentrates on their architecture or sculpture: the page on the miraculous Tritone is all about the *Triton* (who does not matter)—one line mentions the "single jet of water straight up into the air" (which matters very much!). The scratchy drawings do not help: that of the Triton does not show the jet and hardly the Triton himself. Two chapters (widely separated) are called "Roman Journal" and are full of interesting details, but a dozen good photos would have served us much better than Miss Clark's tortuous comparisons and impressionism. Still, it is very interesting to see the recent "Mid-Century" Jubilee through American eyes, the more so because the deeper Miss Clark delves, as into Mariology, the history of Maria Goretti, or the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, the more superficial seem her judgments. But the Jubilee and the personality of the indefatigable Pope undoubtedly impressed her, and to him at least she cannot attribute the materialist or recondite motives which she seems to find proper to ecclesiastics. Yet when she writes about "the monk" Padre Pio and is able to allow the name of Rasputin so much as to enter her mind, we abandon all hope that the other *rapprochements* with which the book abounds may be valid. After all, simplicity and clarity are two great virtues in a writer.

C. C. MARTINDALE

### ART HISTORY TO SOME PURPOSE

*Vision and Technique in European Painting*, by Brian Thomas (Longmans 18s).

IN THE LAST FEW DECADES some scholars have come to feel that the closer art history approximates in its methods to a scientific discipline the better it is as art history or, for that matter, as art criticism. This is a Central European and American rather than a British preoccupation, Wölfflin (but now the iconography of the Warburg Institute) rather than, even, Roger Fry. And has not Professor Pevsner told us that so far the English are not ready for anything



different? Perhaps the untidiness of English criticism, whether of literature or of the visual arts, has more rhyme and reason to it than in our modesty we may at first claim. None the less, we do run to impressionism, and to the imprecise, and to settled ways of talking; and it is the case that in art history and criticism more ignorance and vagueness and emotivity and, to be plain, nonsense are tolerated than in any other branch of letters, only devotional literature excepted.

It is a pleasure, then, and it can be an illumination, when even a familiar story is retold by a man who is first a practising painter and a teacher of drawing and painting, and only next a writer. Mr. Brian Thomas is Principal of the Byam Shaw School, and *Vision and Technique in European Painting* is a painterly history of European painting with an epilogue of some interesting criticism. His story is not new, and he tells it in the simplest possible terms. It has four stages, all exemplifying principles that are basic, according as vision and technique are related in line-design, form-design, tone-design, and (in the nineteenth century) colour-design. Mr. Thomas would be the first to admit that there are overlappings and complexities, but claims that his scheme is the history of pictorial language in Europe, and indeed that no other mode of design is imaginable. We have now come to the end of the cycle. Nothing very exciting, perhaps, but an account of the matter that is clear and thoroughly sound, and full of very good sense.

Mr. Thomas has indeed plenty of painterly good sense, and it gives him a shrewd eye for some aspects of this century's painting. It enables him to observe, for example, that "cubist" painting designs in line and not in form, that "the ingenious pattern of interlocking facets is a free decorative invention, not, as is sometimes asserted, a profound analysis of natural structure." This has been said before, but its very obviousness, perhaps, has made it unpalatable to our more solemn critics. Mr. Thomas is particularly good, however, on the mannerisms and academism of the modern movement that derives from the School of Paris. There has been a spate of talk about a "new vision," but, in fact, as he comments, "instead of beginning with a vision and arriving at a style, modern painters seem to have started off with a determination to devise a new and different style, and then to have press-ganged into service various somewhat synthetic modes of vision to justify their stylistic innovations." As Mr. Thomas does not say (but might), this is not a hypothesis or a diagnosis, but an observation of what is liable to happen all the time to painters that one knows. He does, however, diagnose a cause, and rightly stresses the peculiar modern concept of originality, and the consequent premium put on novelty rather than perfection. The application of evolutionary concepts has not only

confused art history; it has misled criticism and bedevilled some promising artists.

Mr. Thomas is quite right in underlining the mannerism of the School of Paris and its derivatives. He is scathing but, I think, strictly accurate when he comments, of this style, that "there are even signs that this may become the 'Official Style' of public patronage, and be every bit as dreary as the sub-Baroque of Le Brun and the academic realism of the Beaux Arts, with which the French have previously bored Europe." In England, he thinks—but how some critics would revile him for his thought—it is, so far, not the experimentalists of this sort, but Sickert and Steer and Mr. Augustus John and Mr. Stanley Spencer who will endure.

But if we have come to the end of pictorial possibilities, where do we go from here? But to make this an anxious question is to commit the evolutionist fallacy. The resurrection of mural painting is Mr. Thomas's answer, gloomy though the prospect of public patronage may well be, and it is a good answer. For mural painting at one stroke disposes of a host of contemporary "problems of style."

*Vision and Technique* is a short book (190 pages) of rare good sense. It is provided with a set of analytical diagrams and illustrations that really do illustrate.

VINCENT TURNER

### THE CATHOLIC MIND

*Recent Thought in Focus*, by D. Nicholl (Sheed and Ward 16s).

*The Catholic Mind Through Fifty Years*, edited by B. L. Masse, S.J. (The America Press \$5).

*From an Abundant Spring*, edited by the Staff of *The Thomist* (Kenedy, New York \$7.50).

MR. NICHOLL WISHES TO PROVIDE a view of the world "which will enable him to see it in the light of modern learning, and to see that it is good." His first section deals with Modern Philosophy, under the heads of Marxism, Phenomenology, Existentialism, with subdivisions about Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel and "Existentialism Assessed," Logical Positivism, and the mutual relationships of these philosophies. He then deals with the Natural Sciences and Evolution, human and non-human, and finally with Psychology. We wonder if one man can deeply understand all these subjects, to say nothing of bringing them into focus. But we can congratulate him for seeking the good in any system, even when we stand aghast at the welter of modern systems nearly all trying to manage without God.

The incredible industry of the Editor of *The Catholic Mind* has

collected what he thinks to be among the best writing of this Digest between 1903 and 1953. There are 104 excerpts arranged under twenty headings, among which are Liturgy, Charity, Church and State, War, Arts and Letters, and almost what you will. We can say that nearly everything has a bearing on man's political life in the widest sense—we even have an article by T. F. Doyle on "What's wrong with the 'Comics'?" and are ready to agree that they are violent, lewd, ugly, and certainly *not* comic. We have no objection to their not being true to life—the fairy-tales of our youth were not, but they were delightfully illustrated, far more thrilling, and in essence Christian. But we should not have devoted even these few lines to one chapter, save that the "comics" seem to imply an amount of imbecility, in adults, too, that we would not have expected: as for children, they cannot but be other than corruptive, both morally, and even linguistically! The value of the book is inestimable: it is a treasure-house, containing pure gold otherwise scattered far and wide and irretrievable.

The third book consists of twenty-six essays composing the "Walter Farrell Memorial" Volume of *The Thomist*, edited by the Staff of that periodical. One essay, "Freedom of Speech and Speech for Freedom," is by the late Fr. Farrell himself, and we are glad it is included, since what he says fully justifies what is said about him. He was "in America, the priest-Thomist of our times . . . he was articulate, he was daring, he was humble." And yet "he gave more generously of his time to priestly than to scholarly work." He was, in fact, a self-sacrificing leader of men and women, who died suddenly (so the book-cover tells us) in November, 1951, aged only forty-nine. We could wish that a summary of his career had been provided. The essays are all of them valuable, though we cannot in honesty agree that the poems by Thomas Merton deserve to be linked up with those of T. S. Eliot or Gerard Hopkins; and we fear we cannot see why an essay on Browning and the Italian Revolution, however interesting, has a place in this book. Most of the essays are, naturally, by Dominicans—some are recondite in matter, like "The Council of Chalcedon in the Theology of St. Thomas" by Fr. Geenan, O.P., or purely eruditional, like "The Leonine Edition of the Works of Aquinas," by Fr. G. M. Grech, O.P.; but other well-known names are to be found, like those of M. Maritain, Mr. Sheed, Judge R. J. Kiley. Fr. Vann writes about the "Problem of the Catholic Novelist." In short, there are few indeed who will not find something to suit them in this book.

C. C. MARTINDALE

## THE POLES OF AUTHORITY

*Tolérance et Communauté Humaine*, by various writers (Casterman, Tournai, Belgium, n.p.).

*Spiritual Authority in the Church of England*, by Edward Charles Rich (Longmans 21s).

A CURIOUS AND INSTRUCTIVE CONTRAST is furnished by two books presented more or less simultaneously for review, one by an Anglican theologian faced with "the problem of authority become very acute" in his ministry, the other by Catholic writers concerned with the charges that Rome is impossibly "authoritarian." This challenge is increasingly taking the form of questioning the right of Catholics to "tolerance," which they seem pledged, in principle, to refuse to others or to grant only as a measure of expediency. France, Germany, Belgium and, latterly, the United States (chiefly over the attacks of Paul Blanshard in *Freedom and Catholic Power*; *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power*) are among the arenas of combat.

*Tolérance et Communauté Humaine* represents the collaboration of French and Belgian theologians assembled for their "Rencontres Doctrinales" at La Sarte. Subjects discussed include a review of the problems actually confronting the Church in East and West; "Tolerance" as treated by the Fathers, by theologians and in papal documents; collaboration with non-Catholics; religious freedom and civil law; the rights of conscience; totalitarianism. Especially interesting is the treatment "Liberalism" by Leo XIII compared to the attitude of his predecessor, Pius IX. In this section, the difficulties of the "thesis and hypothesis" attempt to reconcile Catholic theory and practice are met quite frankly, and not too solemnly; the French quip is quoted: "When the Nuncio says that Jews must be burnt, that is the thesis; when he dines with Mr. Rothschild, that is the hypothesis."

I can well imagine an educated Hindu, Mohammedan or agnostic grinning at the contrast between such explanations of "authoritarian" pronouncements and what looks very like a vain search for authority by Canon Rich. "An Enquiry" on the title page refers, of course, to the book, but the reader may well end with the impression that it describes "spiritual Authority" as the Anglican conceives it.

The Preface tells of the author moved to his task by "misgivings and disquiet"; he takes up the "burden laid" upon him by an "inner sense of necessity"; the task concluded,

the final result is strangely different from what I had anticipated. I approached the whole question with a conviction that if only my fellow churchmen would be faithful and loyal to their own principles, the Anglican interpretation would be found to be true. It was

my hope that I might be able to trace the development of the Anglican Appeal and in the light of modern scholarship and research to restate its meaning and value for present need. But the book has not worked out quite like that.

Canon Rich, insisting on the "Enquiry" element admits that "the final result may appear to some of my readers to be somewhat inconclusive."

Perhaps that is the importance, as it is the tragedy, of such a book: if a search animated by such sincerity, informed by such learning, yields little but material for further "Enquiry," what becomes of the devout Anglican layman seeking Authority to resolve the contradictions between High, Low and Broad in all their varieties?

At least, he may overcome his deep-seated distrust of "Authoritarianism" in Rome if he is fortunate enough to meet Catholics like the authors of *Tolérance*; there he will find uncompromising insistence on Authority combined with the humility and understanding of Charity.

T. D. ROBERTS

## SHORTER NOTICES

*The Complex Fate*: Hawthorne, Henry James and some other American writers, by Marius Bewley (Chatto and Windus 16s).

*The Metaphysical Passion*: Seven Modern American Poets and the Seventeenth Century Tradition, by Sona Raiziss (Pennsylvania University Press: London, Geoffrey Cumberlege 40s).

TO CALL *The Complex Fate* an American counterpart to *The Great Tradition* (Leavis, of course, not Hicks) is at once to praise it and to describe it—or most of it. The title and the epigraph are from James, and the complex fate is that of being an American with the responsibility "it entails [of] fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe." It seems a little late in the day for this particular kind of American intensity, and I should be tempted to sneer at Mr. Bewley that the complex fate is being alive anyway, were it not that his long and careful study of Hawthorne and James is just the kind of criticism Dr. Leavis at his best has given us for our own great novelists. By this I mean that Mr. Bewley reads his novelists with intelligence and sympathy as carefully as if they were poets, and gives us the resulting insights in a workmanlike prose with which the only fault I can find is that it is practically indistinguishable from that of Dr. Leavis himself (who introduces the book and contributes a courteous argument with Mr. Bewley and, incidentally, Mr. Edmund Wilson, over *What Maisie Knew* and *The Turn of the Screw*).



While I find Mr. Bewley admirable as a critic of the novel, and wish he had given us as well something on Cooper and Melville, the other two of his great quartet, I am not so satisfied with the rest of his book. His attempt to depreciate the reputation of Robert Lowell seems to be the result of peevishness with John Berryman's claim that Lowell is "the master of the Catholic subject without peer since Hopkins"—and to leave Lowell secure in the merits of his poetry. Nor does Mr. Bewley contribute much to our lack of knowledge here of Wallace Stevens. With Mencken and Kenneth Burke he is on securer ground; but the final effect of his book is oddly parochial and disappointing after the exceptionally lucid and intelligent early chapters on James's central theme and his debt to Hawthorne.

Despite my strictures, I find *The Complex Fate* first-class criticism. *The Metaphysical Passion*, on the other hand, is a rather tedious and unnecessary book. The metaphysicals are still very much with us, but Miss Raiziss has made a long descriptive compilation of what has been said about them by Dryden, Eliot, Grierson, etc. etc.—useful in the lecture-room, but neither new nor compelling enough to deserve print. The pity is that her book does wake up in the last third, dealing with modern metaphysicals from Eliot to Elinor Wylie. I feel she might have written a useful book on the Fugitives—Ransom, Tate, Warren—but she has not given herself a chance.

T. H. JONES

*The Enigma of the Hereafter*, by Paul Siwek (Philosophical Library, New York \$3).

THIS BOOK is not a complete study of survival after bodily death, but a close examination of the theory of re-incarnation, and we are amazed to hear that belief in it is—or has been—spreading so widely, at least in America, and we are almost appalled to find the names of Mme Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant re-appearing on serious pages. Belief in transmigration does not and cannot rely on proofs: it belongs to tradition, and not the oldest of Indian traditions even. Perhaps Fr. Siwek might have made more of the sense of family solidarity and continuity, a field into which the belief certainly has driven some of its strongest roots. We would have liked Brahminism to have come first, and Buddhism, a Hindu "heresy," second: but this does not really matter, for it is from the psychological and moral angles that Fr. Siwek approaches his subject, and he deals with it more than competently, far more seriously than it deserves, unless indeed it be true that there is a recrudescence of this fantasy which accounts for his having taken so much trouble over it. Fr. Siwek, who is a profoundly experienced psychologist at Fordham University, discusses



the alleged evidence provided by dreams, the reminiscences of children, paramnesia, virtual memory and so forth; and again, displays the bankruptcy of the re-incarnational theory in the light of morality—it tries to dispense with God and His Law, and founders in even worse contradictions when it invokes the word Karma. We do not like what is impolite; but we are, for once, glad to see these theorists treated rather roughly. The book displays the desperate struggle of those who want to reach Him whom we know to be God, without Christ; and Christ, without His ever-living Church.

*Roman Gaul*, by Olwen Brogan (Bell and Sons 21s).

THIS BOOK WILL BE VERY HELPFUL to those who already know their way about France, and are willing to look up the less-known Roman relics. For it would be difficult to visit Aix-la-Chapelle or Aix-en-Provence, or to travel down the Rhine or the Rhone and remain unaware of buildings that are still so grandiose. But we fear that for those who have no such background or initiative, the book is still too much like a very well written Baedeker, so much has the author tried to compress into 250 pages. Perhaps the historical chapters cannot but suffer from this inevitable compression; yet how exciting might the paragraphs on Paris or Bordeaux have been! How pale do the figures of Ausonius, Paulinus, St. Martin become! But the chapters on art and architecture, the description of theatres and aqueducts, are fascinating, especially if you have been, for example, to Provence, and watched water still rushing up to the top of hill-sides, through "siphons," as the Romans already made it do, for they were not unaware that water seeks its own level. We must not be taken as decrying the value of this book, but as feeling only a temperate enthusiasm for it, so impossible was it for the author to cover this vast expanse of territory and several centuries in a truly living way.

*Jesus, Master and Lord*, by H. E. W. Turner (Mowbrays 21s).

PROFESSOR TURNER attempts, in this valuable book, to summarize and evaluate the most recent available discussions on the historicity and significance of the Gospel record. The result will be welcomed by all who are concerned with the teaching or study of New Testament criticism. It is not, indeed, a layman's book, though many of the laity, we may hope, will find in it much to interest and help them. Nor will it, as Professor Turner himself realizes, find universal consent on all points. It is, to take one example, surely a little cavalier to relegate Abbot Chapman and Abbot Butler to a footnote in the discussion of the priority of Mark. But, on the whole, we feel that we are in contact with a man of great learning and profound sincerity, who has gone to

immense trouble to investigate the sources on which is based our knowledge of the Founder of Christianity.

*The Flagellant of Seville*, by Paul Morand (Lehmann 12s 6d).

**T**HIS STORY, translated into excellent English by Nora Wydenbruck, concerns Spain during the Napoleonic invasion. It may be that the story is almost crushed by the amount of local colouring and of historical detail that the author supplies; but its essence is clear enough. It is the old theme of divided loyalties. Don Luis is, after his fashion, a revolutionary, and wishes Napoleon to win and to liberate Spain from ancestral superstitions. His wife, Maria Soledad, is no less passionately attached to her country's traditions. In consequence, the tale is one of intrigue, treachery, bloodshed, and, in the end, of appalling tragedy. But after all, the whole of this period is the history of man's insensate greed and hatred, the more passionate when it is Spain which is involved, where nothing can fail of violence. The sombre spirit of the great artist Goya broods over the book, and we can but wish that history had not made it possible that so saddening a tale could be written.

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ONE of the great occupational risks of business life under the pressure of to-day is that the practical man of affairs neglects his outside reading, and all too easily falls into a narrow circle of immediate preoccupations. There is always loss in this, and the Catholic business or professional man, as a member of the Church Universal, has a particularly strong reason for keeping his mind open to wider horizons. Certainly it was never more necessary than now to follow world happenings. A direct chain of causes and effects ties every business to economical changes in the world, which are themselves as often the consequence as the cause of changes in men's political and social ideas. These ideas in their turn come out of the religions, or irreligions, of contemporary man.

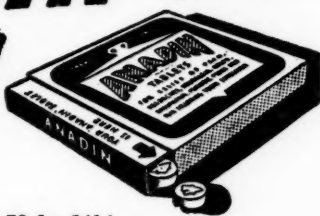
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